To Ian,

Happy 29th! Just some parables from 105 years ago for your enjoyment!

-Bill

9.25.15

Clever Business Sketches

PUBLISHED BY

The Business Man's Publishing Co. Ltd.

Detroit, Michigan, U. S. A.

1910

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INTRODUCTION

This volume makes no pretense for high literary honors.

Just a few short business stories, each with a moral, if you will seek it; done into book form for the entertainment of the reader.

If after you have passed a busy day indoors or afield you will turn to the pages of this little volume, we are sure that you will experience a certain degree of satisfaction which is derived from the lighter things in life.

We have tried in our compilation to make the stories as varied as possible and all of interest to the business man.

If this volume succeeds in giving you a few moments' entertainment, we shall feel that our efforts have been well spent.

THE BUSINESS MAN'S PUBLISHING CO., LTD.

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"The Lure of the Unspoken Word"

THE LURE OF THE UNSPOKEN WORD.

BY CHARLTON LAWRENCE EDHOLM.

It was in the good old wide-open days of San Francisco before the earth—fire, I should say—when Grant avenue was the stamping ground of innumerable fakirs, operating, it was charged, cum permissu superiorum. The editor and proprietor of the late unlamented Rinkey-Dink Monthly and its Minor Poet and general literary hack, Mr. Oscar Algernon Botts, were strolling along that thoroughfare one Saturday evening, discussing such widely varying themes as "Literature" and "Making the Magazine Pay."

The Minor Poet's ideal was as high as the apartments he occupied when at home, likewise a trifle vague and shadowy, resembling his weekly promises to the landlady. Mr. Botts's theory was that there is no melody like that of the song unsung, no power like that of the unspoken word; in plain terms, that the ideas which were suggested rather than affirmed, wielded the greater influence.

"I see your point," said the editor. "What you are trying to say has already been set in cold type. If you will examine your rejection slips you will observe that it is the unavailable manuscripts which possess the literary merit, that quality so ardently coveted by the novice."

"Well, that is a fact!" exclaimed the M. P. warmly, "although it is not the point I am trying to make. My idea is that a hint is more alluring than a definite promise, just as a promise is more alluring than the reality."

"Are you trying to say that an unpaid subscription on the books is a more beautiful thing to contemplate than a 'Please find check herewith'?"

"Oh, pshaw, it's just like you always to try to mix your business with literature! Now, look here: I will

show you a man who is at this very moment turning my theory into cash, though I'll admit that he never works twice in the same town. I saw him last week in San Jose, at the Street Fair. If you'll stop about twenty minutes and listen to him, I'm convinced that even your dull and literal mind will grasp my beautiful theory of the lure of the word unuttered, the song unsung, the promise unmade and therefore never to be broken."

Above the clatter and clang of cable cars on Market street and the myriad-voiced chatter of the Saturday night crowd, the editor and Minor Poet heard a clear, strident intonation that had the drawing quality of a magnet. Mr. Botts, forgetting that he was a master of English, exclaimed, "That's him!"

As they approached the corner, where a flaring gasoline torch threw its glare on a hundred or more upturned faces, the possessor of the magnetic voice stood revealed above the mob, a middle-aged man, dressed in quiet gray tweeds and spotless linen, a soft pearl colored hat on his cropped head. His heavy grizzled mustache was ruthlessly stubbed over thin lips to that scrubbing-brush effect which has replaced the flowing and elegant side whiskers in the circles of high finance. His features were forceful; eyes cold gray and alert, a prominent cleft chin, a well formed aquiline nose and, at each nostril, those deeply graven lines, unmistakable autograph of a sneer. Until he opened his mouth to speak, one might readily take him for a gentleman.

"Now, gents," he was saying, "I want you to observe that I have here four of these mysterious little red boxes, contents unknown, and four playing cards, which I will not conceal, just to prove that everything is open and above board. As you see, they are the Jack of Spades, the King and Queen of the same suite, and the Joker. Now I want four gents in this audience to buy these four boxes containing—there, I nearly let it out! I'll just remark that it's one of the greatest inventions of science,—I generally sell them at one dollar sixty-five, but tonight they are going at

four bits apiece just to interdooce the goods,—and the first four sports that speculates are going to get a big prize. Step up, gents, and show your sporting blood. Who's a game one? Ah, thank you, sir; thank you, thank you, thank you, sir!''

Four bored looking ''gents,'' very different in superficial appearance, but all with the indefinable earmarks of the capper, had elbowed their way from the edge of the crowd to the speaker and passed up their money. Two of them paid with double eagles which were changed with scrupulous accuracy.

''The four gents as have proved their sporting blood will now observe what I do. Here is the Queen of Spades; I tear the card in half, one half I give to this here gent what took the first box; the other half I lay on the table before me and on it I place his purchase, an' on top o' that I lay this here for-bit piece, the same as the gent passed me, and on it, look! look!! look!!!—I lay a bright, new silver dollar, fresh from the mint. I do the same by the other three sports; each man's half gets a whole dollar of mine to top it and every time he buys or purchases one of these here little red boxes I place another cartwheel on his half card.

''Hey, you; don't throw that piece of card away! It may be worth big money to you.''

''Now, gents, do you want another box apiece, or shall I deal another hand?''

Three of the buyers hastily doubled their investment and the thick set one with a bulbous nose, heavy mustache and puffy pouches under the eyes, took four at a time and saw his four halves capped by four shining dollars.

''J. P. Morgan never lets a good thing get past him,'' commented the merchant of red boxes, making change. ''Here's your money; ten, fifteen and three is eighteen. Remember me to Charley Swab next time you see him.''

The crowd grinned at this, but the capper solemnly counted his change and pocketed it. ''Say, this is easy money,'' he remarked to a dapper little counter-

"The Black-faced Comedian smote his banjo, and sang with a rollicking voice"

jumper whose pale blue eyes had gulped down the proceeding. "You want-a break into the next hand?"

The little clerk had thought of doing so, and the advice of the elderly financier decided him. When the ace, deuce, tray and ten-spot were spread out, each with its little red box, he passed up two quarters which he had extracted from a flat purse. A laborer drew a half-dollar from an old tobacco sack and a couple of

other "game ones" invested a fourth of their day's wage and had the joy of seeing the bright new dollar crown their investment. They clutched their half-cards with a feverish grip for fear some one might deprive them of their gains. The pick-and-shovel man carefully folded his, stuffed it into the greasy tobacco pouch and kept his hands in the pocket where it rested. No pickpockets for him! No, sir! He had lost money that way once.

Well, gents, who's next, who's next, who's next, who's next? Them 'at ain't next want-a get next, for I ain't going to give away the firms' money all night. Yes, sir, the firm I represent gives me a thousand dollars as a premium to interdooce the contents of these little red boxes in this city. But the contract is that they only goes to sports. You fellows that ain't got sporting blood might as well leave right now; I'm looking for speculators, not spectators. Step up, gents, I'm dealing another hand. Thank you, sir, thank you, thank you,—and now, one more? Ah, here you are, sir. Two, did you say? Here, don't forget your change; I don't want anything but what's coming to me. The firm pays me a liberal salary and I don't have to knock down change, thank God!"

After half a dozen hands had been dealt, the portable table was covered with fragments of cards, little red boxes and piles of glittering coin, when the promoter of speculation for sports announced: "Well, gents, here are twenty-four half cards, worth all the way from a dollar and a half to twenty dollars. Now I want to see the good right hand of each purchaser so I'll know they're all here. Hold up your hands to be counted; don't be bashful; what if they are stained with honest toil! I tell you the grimy hand of the workingman sustains the world! One, two, three,—seven—eighteen—twenty-four; that's right; twenty-four strong, right hands that kings and emperors might be proud to grasp!

"Now you twenty-four dead game sports are the only wise ones in the crowd, 'cause nobody else is going to break in on this tonight, nobody but one,

that is, for there's luck in odd numbers. Who is going to make the lucky twenty-fifth? I lay a gold eagle on his half card and ask once more, who is the lucky man that buys this last little red box with its mysterious contents?"

A pimply youth in a lavender tie and imitation Panama and a swagger ten-dollar suit pushed forward eagerly, extending a half dollar.

"Hold on, young man, it takes a dollar to buy this box," remarked the captain of finance. The youth produced two additional quarters with nervous haste, lest the golden opportunity should be snatched from his grasp. "I don't know as I'm obliged to take small change," said the promoter, eyeing him severely. "What do you mean by shoving these gents in that disgraceful way? Where'd you learn such manners? You don't seem to have no refinery!"

"I j-just wanted to buy a box," gasped the disconcerted youth.

"You do, do you! Well, just keep your shirt on. Before selling you anything I'm going to learn you a little culcher right here and now. Say, 'Please?' "

"Please."

"Please-sell-me-a-box," continued the instructor in culture-while-you-wait.

"P-please, sir, sell me a box, please!" implored the youth, his eyes on the gold piece.

"Well, gents, you all heard him say 'please,' and so to oblige him I'm going to sell him a box. Here's your card, kiddo; mind you, don't let nobody swipe it off you."

"Now all you twenty-five wise ones are requested to double your stakes. Of course you don't have to; there's no obligation; anybody that's got cold feet can take his purchase and toddle home to bed. That's the best place for quitters, but I have a feeling that the twenty-five hot sports in this crowd are going to stay by the game."

About twenty responded with the coin; three or four slunk away; one fussy little man with sideburns and an arm full of bundles demanded his box, and got

it. To his speechless indigation, he got nothing else but the contents, a spherical piece of glass something like the stopper of a perfume bottle. The enclosed circular designated this five-cent article as a "Noncomplex Microscope," the mightiest invention of science. In spite of this glowing description he seemed to feel that he had not received his money's worth, but he got no sympathy from the crowd which had not the least fellow-feeling for "quitters." The youth with the swagger suit had found three more quarters and borrowed a fourth from a friend to double his stake.

"I do hate to handle this dirty silver!" sighed the promoter of clean sport, whereupon he deliberately washed his hands from a bottle of wine on the table and afterwards refreshed his throat therefrom. "Filthy lucre, filthy lucre! Why, you know, it's just full of germs and parasites!" he protested, as he carelessly swept a few glittering piles into the table drawer. "I risk my life every time I take it off of you. Up with your hands, you guys with the cards!" he suddenly commanded.

"Whew! put 'em down quick. No wonder the coin is so dirty. It's worse than John D.'s tainted money! What's the matter, ain't they no water in your town?"

The non-investors guffawed heartily at this sally, and the proud "sports" looked sheepish and uneasy, but no protest was raised as a couple more handfuls of silver slipped into the drawer.

"Now, gents," continued the genial captain of finance, "I have a few other things to show you before I distribute the purchases and your free-prizes, gifts or premiums that go with each box, after which Professor Pinkley of Pillville and black-faced assistant will endeavor to amuse you. Exhibit A is this here little joker, which, as a traveler, I'm permitted by my friend at police headquarters to carry for purposes of self-defense. It's a beauty all right, in perfect working order, a hammerless six-shooter with a hair trigger. It contains six capital prizes—for soreheads only. Exhibit B is these here beautiful and artistic solid silver teaspoons, one of which goes as a premium

with each purchase. Each good little man presents his card of identification and gets his prize. Here you are, sir, three boxes for you and three spoons, solid silver plate. Here's your's the Jack of Diamonds takes six little red boxes and six spoons, or half a dozen, every one of them solid German-silver plate, warranted not to rust, turn green, wear out nor lose their luster if kept perfectly dry and not removed from their wrappings."

By this time the little piles of gold and silver had all vanished and only the little red boxes and the solid German-silverine-plated spoons remained in sight. The shiny butt of the gun was just visible, peeping coyly from his coat pocket. It made any protest seem narrow-minded, unsportsmanlike and niggardly. At any rate none was made.

"Here you are, sir, Jack of Spades for yours, twelve boxes and a free gift of a dozen elegant spoons fit for the table of the Czar,—no, don't mind thanking me; the pleasures' all mine. Be sure to tell Charley Swab you saw me. And now, gents, I thank you one and all for your kind attention to my lecture and will make way for Professor Pinkley, patentee of Pinkley's Pink Pellets, the Pills that made Pillville famous. His sweet-voiced singer from the Sunny Southland will now entertain you."

And, deftly clapping together his portable table, which folded into something like a suit case, the human dollar-magnet stepped into a waiting buggy and drove rapidly away, the jingle of "easy money" growing fainter and fainter to the ears of the "dead game sports." The black-faced comedian in the service of Professor Pinkley of Pillville, smote his banjo and sang with a rollicking voice:

"Rufus Rastus Johnsing Brown,

What che gwine ter do when the rent comes roun'?"

The editor had stood like one in a trance during the shearing process, and only a convulsive movement of his hand toward the pocket in which he kept his profits indicated how narrowly he had escaped ranking with

the twenty-five shorn lambs. The timely interruption of Mr. Botts was all that had saved him.

"It's wonderful, it's perfectly wonderful!" he gasped. "There's something in your theory, Bottsy."

"Of course there is," said the Minor Poet loftily. "He is of the elect. He understands the lure of the unspoken word. You will observe that he did not break the law, although he cheated, bullied, and even threatened with violence the unselected crowd of the street corner. He did not make any promises, and therefore could not break any. He even had his victims trained to say 'please' and 'thank you' while he parted them from their money. No, it is not hypnotism, it is The Lure. That is the kind of thing which I try to get into my sonnets, although on a loftier plane than the material, of course."

"What you need is something of that sort to sell your sonnets," replied the editor and proprietor of the Rinkey-Dink Monthly. "Gad! if I had a fellow like that in charge of my advertising department! By George, I'll do it. He can make his own terms. How do you suppose I can get in touch with that fellow?" he asked, abruptly.

"You might try police headquarters," replied the Minor Poet. "Say," he added, "couldn't you use a little write-up of that scene in the paper?"

"Sure, sure! Put it together and send it in," replied the editor as he detached himself hurriedly and darted away in the direction of the Hall of Justice.

It was a month later. The Minor Poet was beginning to wonder why he had not heard about that manuscript which he had promptly submitted. Another commission had kept him from the office of the monthly; the manufacturer of a patent eyelet for laced shoes had ordered a set of incomplete limericks for a prize competition. There was some money in that kind of work!

The postman's knock interrupted his as he was trying to find a good rhyme for the line

The man who wears Pudd's Patent Eyelets.

He feared that even the uncritical ear of Pudd would reject "violets." With some preoccupation he opened his door to receive the regular daily sheaf of returns, those sonnets and stories which came back, like the dove to the ark, bearing an olive branch in the form of a neatly printed testimonial of literary merit.

One of the envelopes which he opened contained his little description of the human dollar-magnet, but with it, in place of the usual rejection slip, was a scrap of "copy" paper on which the following note was inscribed in the firm handwriting of the editor and proprietor of the Rinky-Dink Monthly:

"Dear Bottsy:—We secured the services of your street corner friend for the adv- dept., according to your suggestion. His salary was only $500 per, which was reasonable, as he landed contracts for about $2,000 and collected on them. He succeeded in raising two mortgages on the plant and sold the office furniture to a second-hand man named Goldstein. That was the day he left town. I am camping in the office to prevent Goldstein from taking possession. Your theory about the lure of the unspoken word is a regular peach in literature, but somehow I couldn't make it work in my business. Yours faithfully,

"J."

THE BUSINESS SPY

BY F. B. LINTON

"WHAT can I do for you?" inquired John Garrison, owner and operator of the Independent Coal Mines, glancing from his desk to the young man who unannounced had entered his office. "I am a very busy man this morning."

The young man moved a chair close to Garrison's desk, sat down, adjusted a pair of rimless nose glasses, and eyed him keenly.

"You sent for me," he replied.

"Who in the Dickens are you?"

"Gilbert, Paul Gilbert."

"Oh! You are Gilbert, the secret service agent. I was expecting to see an older man. I am glad to see you, Mr. Gilbert, very glad, indeed," and his frank expression and the warm grasp of his hand convinced Gilbert that he was sincere.

"Then I take it that the coal trust is pushing you hard. Men are generally in a tight place when they send for me," said Gilbert.

"Yes, they have me in a tight place. They have told me that they will run me out of business or break me. They may break me—I am beginning to fear they will—but I swear they'll never run me out while I've got a cent left to fight with," replied Garrison excitedly. "There have been times when I would have sold out to them for a fair price, but that time has passed. It's a fight to a finish now!"

"That's the proper spirit, Mr. Garrison," said Gilbert quietly, "but you are talking too loud. The manager of the trust in Pittsburg may hear you. It's only 50 miles and we have wireless telephony now, you know."

"He already knows as much about my business as I do," answered Garrison more calmly. "He finds

out where I send quotations and underbids me. He finds out when my contracts expire and prevents my renewing them. He knows my exact output, and my profit and loss on every transaction. Every move of mine is anticipated and obstacles put in my way. So difficult is it for me to get and hold customers that the cost of my sales department eats up all the profits. If I don't get a check on them somewhere, it's only a question of time until I go to the wall. I must find out how they learn my carefully guarded trade secrets. It is for that purpose I want to engage your services. I'll have to fight the devil in his own way."

"Indeed?" queried Gilbert.

"I did not refer to you," replied Garrison with a laugh.

"If you will tell me the exact steps that have been taken in the fight," said Gilbert, "I shall know where to begin work. It is perhaps unnecessary to remind you that you must trust me implicitly."

When they parted two hours later Gilbert knew the situation thoroughly. He went directly to Pittsburg, the headquarters of the bituminous coal trust.

The next day Garrison had a stroke of luck. The United Steel and Manufacturing Company of Pittsburg opened negotiations with him for their supply of coal. They had previously obtained all their coal from the trust. They now desired to make a five years' contract with Garrison for a weekly supply that was about the average output of his mines. They offered a price that would be exceedingly profitable to Garrison; for if he secured the contract he could do away with his expensive sales department, and defy the trust for at least five years.

The only feature in the contract that he did not like was the excessive penalty imposed on him for failure to deliver weekly the amount specified. That penalty would mean ruin if for any reason he could not deliver the coal. The U. S. & M. Co. would not yield one jot on that point. "They are afraid," thought Garrison, "that if I fail them, the trust will refuse to sell them coal at any price."

He could see nothing, however, that could prevent him from supplying the required amount. He owned the coal land and could mine that much with his present equipment. He could keep a sufficient quantity in reserve to tide him over any short delay caused by a break in the machinery or other accidents. His profits would be large enough to prevent any threatened strike by granting an increase to his miners. He decided to accept the terms and close the contract.

He wired Gilbert: "Unnecessary to proceed further. Come here at once."

In two hours he received this reply: "Don't close contract with U. S. & M. Co. Keep up negotiations. Important developments here. Cannot leave now. Under no circumstances close the contract.

"GILBERT."

"The Dickens!" exclaimed Garrison. "How does he know anything about this contract? The United Steel and Manufacturing Company seemed to desire secrecy even more than I. Not a man in my office knows about it. I thought this was one transaction that even the trust would know nothing of until it is closed."

Then it occurred to him that if he delayed, the trust would probably learn of it. Perhaps they knew of it already. What if they had bribed Gilbert to block the deal? Why should he be guided by Gilbert? Assuming that Gilbert was honest in his intentions, he evidently did not know all the facts in the case; or else he was using very poor judgment.

The United Steel and Manufacturing Company were pressing him for a final decision.

The morning after his conference with Garrison, Gilbert in his private office on the fifteenth floor of a skyscraper on Smithfield St., Pittsburg, received the reports of two of his assistants. They had been detailed the evening before to get certain definite information in regard to the organization and the working system of the coal trust. Gilbert's offices were ostensibly those of an expert accountant and business systematizer. That, in fact, had been his occupation

until he had become a commercial secret service agent on account of his peculiar talents and accurate knowledge of men and the methods of business organization. In this line of work he found a wide field for action, and, after he demonstrated his ability, a great demand for his skill. For system and justice he had an admiration amounting almost to reverence. It was his delight to pit his skill and intelligence against that of greedy and dishonest managers and operators of business organizations, and force them to abandon unjust practices.

It was with keen pleasure that he now set about learning the method by which the newly formed coal trust was trying to drive out all competitors in general and Garrison in particular. It was clear that they hoped to monopolize the bituminous coal industry of western Pennsylvania.

In company with one of his assistants, Gilbert called at nine o'clock on J. C. Bishop, the manager of the trust. His assistant carried a tin case, somewhat like a typewriter case but larger, and four iron legs to support it. Bishop was intrenched in a private office and as inaccessible as the Czar of Russia. Knowing this, Gilbert brought a letter of introduction from J. J. Smith of New York, the president of the Board of Directors of the coal trust. That this letter had been prepared in Gilbert's office was not apparent on its face. The signature had been so cleverly forged that it deceived the men who were most familiar with the genuine.

"Mr. Bishop," said Gilbert, pointing to the case which the assistant placed in the corner of the office, "I have there an invention that will do the work of fifteen bookkeepers. It will——"

"Look here, young man," interrupted Bishop, "I have no time to talk to agents. Take that thing out and explain it to my chief clerk."

"I am not trying to sell this machine, Mr. Bishop," replied Gilbert. "Mr. Smith, your president, wants you to look into this with him with the view of manu-

facturing it. Mr. Smith himself will be here this afternoon. I want to leave it until he comes."

"You say that Mr. Smith is coming today?" inquired Bishop.

"I have an appointment with him here at five o'clock," replied Gilbert.

"It is strange that he has not wired me. I have my hands full, too. I've no time to monkey with crazy inventions."

"Well, he's coming," replied Gilbert in no wise rebuffed. "It is his desire, too, that no one gets to examine my invention until he has looked into it. Will you see that it is not disturbed?"

"No one will touch it."

"Then good day, Mr. Bishop," and Gilbert and his assistant left the office.

Promptly at five o'clock Gilbert again called. Mr. Smith had not arrived. Gilbert was greatly surprised. He could not understand the president's failure to keep his appointment. Probably they would hear from him later. He did not want to take any of Mr. Bishop's time, he said, so he carried his machine away until such time as Mr. Smith should designate for him to return it.

When Gilbert reached his own office he placed his machine very carefully on the floor, threw off his coat, and adjusted his nose glasses.

"Now, Billy," he said to his assistant, "lock the door and we shall see if your guess that there would be something doing in Bishop's office to-day was correct,"

"I didn't set Bishop's office boy up to dinner last night for nothing," replied Billy with a grin.

"My machine is still running and makes absolutely no sound!" exclaimed Gilbert, removing the case which covered it. "The record cylinders have fallen into place without a hitch. We've got a record of every word spoken in Bishop's office today."

One by one Billy transferred the cylinders from the recording machine to a phonograph.

Gilbert leaning back in a comfortable chair with his

feet propped upon his desk, and a cigar in his mouth, listened intently to every sound reproduced.

There were interviews with the heads of various departments, then a series of letters dictated, and a conversation with a manufacturer in regard to a big contract; but this was of no interest to Gilbert. The peculiar sound of the phonograph became monotonous. He closed his eyes and was falling into a doze when suddenly he sat bolt upright, every faculty alert, his whole attention concentrated on the machine. Bishop was talking to the president of the United Steel and Manufacturing Co., and the president of the P. V. & L. R. R. Co. Garrison's name was mentioned. They discussed the details of an agreement. The U. S. & M. Co. was trying to close a contract with Garrison binding him to deliver a certain amount of coal weekly and imposing a ruinous penalty for his failure to do so. The P. V. & L. R. R. Co., which controlled the lines over which Garrison must ship his coal, would prevent him from getting enough cars, sidetrack the cars he did get, and by any other means that might be necessary make it impossible for him to deliver the coal. The purpose of this arrangement was to force Garrison out of business and give the coal trust a monopoly. For their part in the work according to the agreement the P. V. & L. R. R. Co. was to get all the freight business of the coal trust. The U. S. & M. Co. was to get a rebate on the price they paid Garrison for any coal that he did succeed in delivering, and when he was put out of business their coal was to be supplied by the trust at a very low figure for a number of years. The terms of this agreement were put in writing and three conspirators signed it. The written agreement was left in Bishop's care until the U. S. & M. Co. secured the signed contract from Garrison.

Scarcely had the phonograph told the story of the plot when Gilbert received Garrison's telegram instructing him to proceed no further with his investigations.

"He is walking right into the trap," thought Gilbert, "but he has not signed the contract yet. He must not call the thing off at once, but keep up negotiations."

He then wired Garrison the warning not to sign the contract.

The next morning as Gilbert was leaving his office he was called to the telephone. Garrison wanted to speak to him.

"I have signed the contract, Mr. Gilbert," said Garrison. "It was too good a thing to let go. I thought——"

"What?" shouted Gilbert. "Didn't you get my telegram?"

"Yes; but I thought you didn't know——"

"You're a fool, Garrison, a big fool. It's a wonder the trust hasn't gobbled you up long ago," replied Gilbert angrily.

"Sir," came the indignant reply, "you wouldn't talk like that in my presence. What do you mean?"

"The coal trust wrote that contract for the U. S. & M. Co., and——"

"How's that?"

"——the P. V. & L. R. R. Co. are going to prevent you from delivering the coal."

"My God, man, I'm ruined!"

"Not if you have sense enough to follow my directions. Come to my office tomorrow morning at 10 o'clock. In the meantime continue your preparations to supply coal on the contract. The trust people must not learn that you know that they have trapped you. Good bye," and Gilbert rang off.

"Well, this is getting interesting," he thought. "Garrison does not really deserve to be pulled out of this; but it will be worth while to knock in the head the plans of those respectable gentlemen who flatter themselves that they can trifle with the laws of justice as easily as with the laws of their servants, the legislators. We shall see if they can. But Garrison was right; we shall have to fight the devil in his own way."

Gilbert gathered from some words reproduced by the phonograph that Bishop's chief clerk had been authorized to employ an additional book-keeper and he determined to get the job; for a man on the inside has an obvious advantage over a man on the outside

when it comes to getting carefully guarded secrets.

His letter of introduction from President Smith came again into service; but this time he presented it to the chief clerk who ushered him at once into the presence of Mr. Bishop. The manager's office opened into the main office. Gilbert feared that Bishop might have received communications from President Smith tending to weaken confidence in his veracity. When the chief clerk left them, however, he boldly asked if President Smith had sent word yet when he was coming to examine his invention. Learning that the president had not announced the time of his coming and that it was Mr. Bishop's desire that he never would come for that purpose, and his earnest wish never to hear of or see the invention again, Gilbert, after venturing to express the belief that he would become intensely interested in it and his certain conviction that he would again hear of it, went out into the main office.

Gilbert's pleasant smile when he came out led the chief clerk to believe that he had had a very satisfactory interview with Mr. Bishop.

"I applied to Mr. Bishop for a job as an accountant," said Gilbert. "He requested me to say to you that if you have not yet put a man in that new position, to give me a trial."

"No. I have not filled the place," replied the chief clerk.

"Then I'm in luck," said Gilbert. "If you will outline my work, I shall try to get my hand in to-day."

Gilbert was pleased to note that when seated at his desk assigned him he faced the door of Bishop's office. The man whom the chief clerk assigned to show Gilbert his duties, concluded that he was the most inquisitive fellow he had ever met. His desire to become acquainted with the details of his work was not so marked as his eagerness to acquire a general knowledge of the office system and personnel. His persistence in seeking information in regard to the manner and place in which the records of the manager's office were filed, provoked his preceptor to inquire sarcas-

tically if he had any designs on the manager's job.

Gilbert, however, was not so absorbed either in his duties or his inquiries as to fail to scrutinize every person who entered or came out of the manager's office. Soon after his instructor left him to work out his own salvation, Bishop came out hat in hand and descended in the elevator. As he passed through the office, Gilbert realized that it was an opportune time to put the lower drawer of his desk in order, but no sooner was Bishop out of sight than he lost his suddenly acquired interest in the job.

In just five minutes by his watch, he went into the telephone booth and called up Bishop's private secretary who was still in the manager's office.

"This is the Duquesne Hotel," he said to the secretary. "Mr. Bishop has stopped in here and he wants you to come at once and take some dictation."

Receiving assurances that the secretary would go immediately to the hotel, Gilbert went back to his desk. A moment later he had the satisfaction of seeing him come out and enter the elevator.

"Now I shall have at least fifteen minutes," thought Gilbert, as he walked boldly into the manager's office and closed the door. After pausing a moment to see if he was followed, he went rapidly through the drawers and pigeon holes of the manager's desk. Then he turned his attention to an open safe in the corner. In a moment, he uttered an exclamation of satisfaction. He had found the written agreement signed by the three conspirators.

He thrust it in his pocket. Arising from his stooping posture, he stood face to face with the chief clerk.

"What are you doing in that safe?" inquired the chief clerk sternly.

"Nothing. You didn't see me do anything, did you?" replied Gilbert, with a forced laugh, parrying for time in which to frame a plausible explanation.

"No?" said the chief clerk coldly.

"Don't get sarcastic," said Gilbert, with a wave of his hand. "I came in after this"—reaching in his pocket where he had put the agreement, but bringing

out instead his forged letter of introduction from President Smith—"you have read it. I left it here with Mr. Bishop, but it occurred to me a moment ago that I would want it tonight to present to a personal friend of President Smith's—perhaps you know that I am the president's nephew—so I came in here to get it. I thought that Mr. Bishop was here, but when I found him out, and the safe door open—I saw him put it in there—I took it. And," he continued indignantly, "I don't like being jacked up as if I were a thief. You see the cash drawer is locked. I didn't get the money."

The chief clerk apologized, begged him to consider that he was prompted by a sense of duty, and forced him to admit that his actions were suspicious.

Accepting the apology with an air of a man who can afford to be magnanimous, Gilbert went back to his desk and took up his work.

A few minutes later Mr. Bishop's secretary returned and hastened into the private office. He came out immediately and held a whispered consultation with the chief clerk. They both re-entered the private office.

Gilbert seized his hat and made a hasty exit. As he went out the street door he met Bishop coming in. A half block away he found his cab which was waiting for him and was driven rapidly to his offices on Smithfield street.

The next morning in company with Garrison, Gilbert called on the president of the P. V. & L. R. R. Co. Briefly Garrison stated their business. They desired him to sign a contract. They had it written out in full. The president adjusted his glasses and settled back in his chair to read it. Gilbert watched his face closely. The terms of the contract bound the railroad company to deliver Garrison's coal to the U. S. & M. Co. at the same price that the trust was to get as stated in the written agreement. It also imposed a penalty for any delay or failure to deliver the coal of the exact amount that Garrison was bound to pay by his contract. When the president came to this part of the contract he flashed a look of inquiry at Garri-

son. Did he know the terms of the secret agreement or was it a mere coincidence? When he finished reading the contract, the president with a great show of indignation informed the gentlemen that before he would sign it he would see them consigned to a region where they would need no coal.

"I'll bet you sign in five minutes," said Gilbert, looking at him steadily.

"You're a fool," replied the president, meeting his gaze without flinching.

"If you sign it, Mr. Garrison can carry out his very profitable contract with the U. S. & M. Co., and be in a position to defy the coal trust," suggested Gilbert with a smile.

"I am not interested in Mr. Garrison's contracts. If he has made a good one, that is no reason why I should make a bad one," said the president.

"But I take it from this," said Gilbert, holding up the written agreement which he had taken from Bishop's safe so that the president could see the three signatures, "that you are interested in it."

The president sprang to his feet.

"How did you get that?" he demanded.

"Never mind how I got it," said Gilbert, rising and looking him squarely in the eye. "Will you sign this contract or shall we enter suit against you and the others for conspiracy? You have two minutes more in which to act."

The president noted the resolute, aggressive stamp of Gilbert's features. He cursed his folly for having been induced against his own judgment to have the terms of the agreement put in writing and signed. Gilbert held his watch in his hand. He glanced from it to the president inquiringly. The president took up the contract, hesitated a moment, and then signed it.

"So long as you keep the terms of this contract," said Gilbert, putting it in his pocket, "the written proof of your conspiracy will be safe in my keeping. But break either the spirit or the letter of the contract and—but I know you won't, Mr. President, of course not," and Gilbert and Garrison bowed themselves out.

THE STRIPED TOURISTS.

BY MONTAGUE GLASS.

Abe Potash, of Potash & Perlmutter, jobbers and wholesalers of ladies' cloaks and suits, stood in front of his store, ready and willing to greet customers, but none came. Instead, Louis Mintz, manufacturers' drummer, rushed across the street, dodging two trolley cars and an automobile in his progress, and grasped him warmly by the hand.

Now Louis' lay was sympathy, and he made haste to put it in practice with Abe Potash.

"Well, Abie, my boy," he said, "you look like you'd struck the high and dry place between a failure and a fire. What's the trouble?"

Abe disengaged his right hand from Louis' cordial embrace, and backed away hurriedly.

"Please," he protested, "no jokes. Enough's enough. The last time you was here, you made some fine jokes for Perlmutter, and we got them striped tourists' coats yet."

Louis looked grieved.

"Why, they're my best sellers, Abie. If I'd thought you was going to get stuck with them tourists, I'd uv eat 'em first."

"Eat 'em now," Abe suggested. " 'Tain't too late. They're all there, just where your expressman left them."

The troubled look on Louis' face grew almost agonizing in its intensity.

"Now, that ain't no way, Abe," he grumbled. "Perlmutter bought them, and Perlmutter's your partner."

"My partner?" Potash cried, and his bushy eyebrows elevated themselves so far, that it seemed impossible for them to descend again without surgical assistance.

He seized Mintz by the coat and dragged him into the store.

"Come," he said eagerly, "I want you should hear some things. You shall judge it between us."

"Hold on, there, Abe," Louis cried, struggling to free himself. "That's a new suit."

"I'll buy you another," Abe said, releasing his grasp on the drummer's coat, "if you take back them tourists."

He led the way to the office in the rear.

"You ain't in no hurry, no?" he commenced. "Then sit down. Here, have some cigars," he pulled a handful from his pocket. "Take 'em all, I don't smoke."

"Much obliged, Abie. What are you doing? Buying cigars for the drummers?"

"Me buy cigars for drummers?" Abe cried indig-

"He seized Mintz by the coat"

nantly. "I catch myself. I don't buy no cigars for nobody. All such things, such nonsense, I leave for Perlmutter."

Louis lit one of the cigars and blew a great cloud of smoke.

"Where's Perlmutter now?" he asked. "Is he out?"

Potash laughed a hollow, mirthless guffaw.

"No, Louis," he replied. "Perlmutter ain't out. I am out. Abe Potash is out. Business ain't bad enough, Louis; collections ain't slow enough, Louis;

sales ain't falling off enough, Louis; but that big fool, that crazy Perlmutter, he gets it into his head he must go off and get married."

Potash gained heat as he proceeded, and punctuated each enough, with a bang of his fist.

"Is Morris Perlmutter married?" Louis exclaimed.

"So sure as you smoke them cigars from his wedding," Potash said solemnly. "Perlmutter is married and away on his wedding tower. He got to have a tower, too, Louis. When I was married I had towers, too, you believe me, Louis. My wife and me, we don't know what towers is, when we got married. But Perlmutter he must have everything. Towers he must have, with Meyer Rothschild's daughter."

"Of Rothschild & Pollak?" Louis asked.

"That's them," Potash assented, "Rothschild & Pollak. You know 'em, Louis?"

Louis nodded.

"Then I don't have to tell you that Rothschild's a pollak, but Pollak ain't no Rothschild, Louis, no siree. Pollak is one plain crook,—two fires in Milwaukee and a failure in Toledo. Nice people they are, Louis, believe me."

"And where did Perlmutter go with his bride?" Louis inquired.

"Ask me where he goes?" Potash grunted. "Atlanta, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington and Old Point Comfort. When I was married, I went with my Rosie to Old Point Comfort, Louis. Believe me I was happy we could go to two rooms on Third street. But then I married a common-sense girl, Louis; not so stylish, but a good cook, y' understand. I give you my word, Louis, we was by Rothschild's for dinner last week, and I thought I was poisoned. Perlmutter says Minnie Rothschild cooked that dinner all by herself. I don't know if he speaks the truth or not, Loius,—Perlmutter is such a liar you can't depend on him from one word to another,—but if she did cook that dinner, Louis, then Perlmutter has as good as committed suicide."

Here Potash was interrupted by the postman's whistle.

"Don't go, Louis," he apologized; "I'll get them letters and come right back."

He returned a moment later with three letters.

"Ain't that the funniest thing, Louis?" he said. "Here's three letters from Perlmutter; one from Atlanta, one from Baltimore, and one from Philadelphia.

"Three of a kind," Louis commented.

"No good to me, Louis," Potash murmured. "I might as well throw 'em in the discard."

He opened the letter from Atlanta first.

"I'll read it to you, Louis," he explained. "I aint' got no secrets from nobody."

He adjusted his glasses at the proper angle and commenced:

"Mr. A. Potash:

"Friend Abe: I trust this letter finds you well. The same I can assure you. Well, Abe, we are in Atlanta. Minnie thought we should go right through to Atlanta and make Washington, Baltimore and Philadelphia on our way back, as we can stay in Atlanta over Sunday and maybe do some business."

Potash looked up from his reading.

"A bluff," he snapped. "She cares a lot about business."

"Go ahead with your letter," said Louis, and Potash started in again.

"Well, Abe, I seen Mishkind this a. m. and he ain't buying no striped tourists."

"Sure not," Potash commented, bitterly.

"He wants you should ship him by express duplicate order 1423. Only you should send 8 doz. lot 4080 instead of 4 as last month. Inclosed please find Rabiner's check for $525. He says I should make it 10 off 30 days and 5 ex. But I told him that people what is such slow pay like him must ask no favors from nobody. Yours respectfully,

"Morris Perlmutter.

"P. S.—How's business in the store?"

He folded the letter and threw it on the desk.

"Mawruss done well in getting that money, Louis. The boy done well."

Louis nodded again.

"He's a good boy, Louis, only a little wild. Maybe—I don't know—marriage makes a man out of him. What, Louis?"

"Maybe," Louis answered enigmatically.

"Well, here's the next," Abe said, and commenced to read the Baltimore letter.

"Mr. A. Potash:

"Friend Abe: Well, Abe, we had a good time in Atlanta and it is a good live town. We got to Balto this a. m. and Rosenberg said he ain't using no stripes."

"What did I tell you?" Abe cried.

"I enclose his order on separate sheet. $1,222.24 ain't so bad. Also order from Finkelbein $840.75.

"And she cooked that dinner all by herself"

Elenbogen & Klein $942.80. We expect to see Kinstler this p. m. before leaving for Phila.

"Yours in haste, M. Perlmutter.

"P. S.—I hope everything is O. K. in store."

Potash closed the letter with a smile.

"I tell you, Louis, when a young man grows up, like Mawruss, it's only right he should find a nice girl like Minnie Rothschild, and get married. It gives him something to work for. Am I right or wrong, Louis?"

"Let's hear the next one," Louis said, and Abe opened the last letter.

"Mr. Abraham Potash: "Philada.

"Friend Abe: Well, Abe, Finkelbein says you should double up on lot 4080. This makes his order $1,329. Ship at once. Stripes ain't no good in Philadelphia, too. Levy & Marcus, The Fair and Square Store, Herman Block and M. Fishlowitz orders on the other side. Home Sunday.

"Resp., M. Perlmutter.

"Regards to all friends in store."

"When a man's got a good live partner, Louis," Abe said, beaming, "business is always good, ain't it? I tell you, Louis, the only thing the matter with Mawruss was that he don't get married. If I say it once, I say it a thousand times, 'Mawruss, why ain't you got married? Be a man, Mawruss.' And he took my advice, Louis, and he's got a nice girl, a good girl and a good cook, too. I give you my word, Louis, my Rosie is a good cook; but Minnie Rothschild, that's a good cook. Excuse me while I answer the phone."

He took down a receiver as the bell trilled impatiently.

"Hallo, hallo. Yes,—this is Potash and Perlmutter. Yes,—Oh, wie gehts, Mr. Pollak. How's Mr. Rothschild? That's good. Have we any striped tourists? I'll see."

He covered the transmitter with his hand, and winked solemnly at Louis. Then he resumed the telephone conversation.

"Hallo, Mr. Pollak. I think I can let you have some. No, I ain't got many, only two gross. Why, no, Mr. Pollak, that ain't many. I'll ship 'em to you this afternoon. Much obliged, Mr. Pollak. Good-bye."

He hung up the receiver with a profound sigh.

"Louis," he said, earnestly, "that Mr. Pollak, that's one fine gentleman. Comes from fine people, y'understand, on the other side. That's a fine concern, Rothschild and Pollak; gilt edge A number one. You know Mr. Rothschild? That's Mawruss' father-in-law. Sure. Well, good bye, Louis."

"How about some more of them striped tourists, Abe?"

"That's right, Louis. I come near forgetting all about it. Just duplicate that order."

BILL SICKLES—LAZY MAN.

BY EDWARD BLOMEYER.

Illustrations by Ernest Adams.

He came to us in one of the annual, before Christmas, "round-ups" of extra help—a long, lanky, half-starved looking individual, with a big, square jaw and a pair of steel gray eyes that bored into you like a pair of gimlets when he looked at you; the laziest awkwardest, easiest-going, best natured specimen of the man-animal it has ever been my fortune to run across, and I've met several. His speech was hardly more than a drawl; he said "wa'll" for "well" and talked through his nose with the inborn facility found only in the true native of old New England. The boss, as was usual, had advertised for a bunch of new men to help get out the holiday rush orders, and among the first to line up outside the private office door that morning was this William Sickles—called "Bill" for short, and, when we got to know him, "Lazy Bill," which described him better.

The boss got down late that morning, and his temper, which never graded more than 60 per cent perfect when he was in the best of humor, was in shape to raise the hair on the heads of the boldest of the office force—who knew him by bitter experience. But black looks and heavy frowns worried Bill not at all; when his turn came for inspection he sauntered into the office with all the ease and grace of a millionaire boarding his private yacht, and dropped coolly and calmly into a softly upholstered chair by the old man's desk.

"Stand up!" roared the boss, getting red in the face; "what the blankety-blank d'ye think this is—a tea party?"

Bill stood up and leaned against the desk.

The old man looked him over with a face like a thunder cloud.

"Bill Sickles"

"Well," he growled, "what can you do?"

Bill smiled sweetly. "What hev ye got to do?" he chirped.

"Little of everything," snorted the boss. "Talk quick, man! My time's valuable!"

Then he drawled, "Wa'll, I kin do it."

Bill thought a moment.

"Do it," fumed the old man, "do what?"

"Little of everything."

The boss came near exploding. He got redder and redder, and he sputtered and steamed like a teakettle on a red-hot stove. He chewed savagely on his cigar as he gave the call button on his desk a vicious punch. "Here, Johnson," he howled, as the door opened and Johnson's head stuck timidly in, ready to dodge if necessary, "take this man and murder him—give him a thousand dollars—put him to work—anything, man, so long as you get him away from here before I hurt him! Scat—both of you! I'm busy."

Johnson was so badly scared that he missed all of the instructions but the last, and he followed that part literally, and put Bill to work.

It turned out that Bill was a pretty good hand with a marking brush, so Johnson sent him down to the shipping department, where they were all working eighteen hours a day to move the holiday pile-up. The shipping boss put Bill in a little ante-room all to himself, gave him a brush and a can of lamp-black, and told him to go as far as he liked. Bill went to work.

Three or four days later the head shipper got a moment's spare time and wandered into the little room to see how his new hand was getting along. He found Bill perched comfortably on an empty packing case, his feet on another, drawing lazily on an old cob pipe, and reading the "Wholesaler's Gazette."

"Great melting beeswax!" howled Bill's boss, "What in the hop-one-and-skip-two do you mean by settin' up there like a knot on a log when there's all this work to do? Come down off that box, you blinkety-blinked lazy, good for nothing——"

Bill interrupted his irate superior with a lazy wave of his hand. "You see them air boxes, don't ye?" he inquired good naturedly, indicating a huge pile of shipping cases reaching clear to the ceiling across the room.

"Yes—yes—"

'Wa'll, they're all marked, ain't they?"

The boss went closer and took a look. They were all marked—marked well, too, with neat figures and letters that looked more like print than hand work. The boss turned to Bill inquiringly. "Well—" he began.

"That's a day's work," volunteered Bill, "all done this morning. You see, I diskivered that we was a shippin' goods day after day to the same people, an' so I jest up an' cut me a bunch o' stencil sheets the other day. Now all I hev to do is to jest slap the sheet on the box an' run the brush over it, an' it's done. When I run across a new address, I make me a new stencil—an' the balance of the time, I rest."

This all happened years ago, remember, before the introduction of the multitudinous devices now in use for the shortening of work, and even such a simple little thing as a stencil was not then in general use by the big shippers. Well, the upshot of the matter was that, after the head shipper had calmed down enough to investigate Bill's work, he liked it so well that he had stencils made right away for every customer the firm had. There had been four men, including Bill, kept busy nailing lids on boxes and marking them,

"He found Bill perched on an empty packing box, drawing on an old cob-pipe"

and when the stencils were put in use, it was found that three could do the work. One man had to go, and as Bill was the newest, he found himself out of a job.

Lost his job, did I say? Well, not exactly, either—the manager of the first stock floor knew a good thing when he saw it, and he gobbled up Bill and put him to work as a stock clerk at two dollars more on the week.

Bill might have been lazy, but he was an easy learner, and in six months he had the run of the first stock floor—hardware and builder's supplies—so well that he could shut his eyes and tell off the stock numbers without skipping even a brass headed screw. Now, the firm is an old one, which has grown up by gradual stages from a very small beginning, and in some instances the handling system has not kept pace with the growth of the business. The stock rooms were at that time a fair sample of this non-progression. When an order was received, the order department made from it a slip for each floor, showing the goods necessary from that department to fill the order; the head stock man of the floor assigned a copy of his slip to the first stock clerk unemployed. The clerk filled the order complete, and run the basket containing the goods onto the elevator, which carried it and a copy of the packing slip down into the shipping room.

Bill worked all right for a time, then the lazy bug bit him again, and when the lazy bug bit Bill it seemed always to bite him on the head, for right away his noggin commenced to churn out schemes for saving work. He smoked a few pipefuls of "twist" over the matter, and then he went to the boss with a plan which was simplicity itself. He figured that if each man was given only a certain section of the floor to attend to, and the first man getting the order filled it complete from his section, and then passed the basket on to the section nearest him, the eleven men on that floor would save a good deal of the time they used in running all over the room, to say nothing of the advantage to one William Sickles, who intended, if possible, to get a department so small that he could reach every corner of it while sitting down.

The first floor manager was a progressive sort of a fellow, and he took to the idea like a Dutchman does to beer. It was so successful that the floor could get along with ten men instead of eleven—and the eleventh man was Bill. So it was another case of "Move on, Bill."

About that time one of the boys in the order department decided to seek pastures new, and as it was a rule of the house never to employ an outsider when a place could be filled by an available man from another department, the manager of the order department immediately set up a howl for a man to fill the vacancy. Bill, being at the moment on the wing, as it were, was sent in to take the place.

The head of the order department looked the new recruit over with a sad, far-away expression in his eyes. Then he lifted up his voice and expressed himself most volubly and sarcastically. His remarks were to the effect that it was his own private and individual opinion that the gentleman before him would make much more of a success in life if he were permanently engaged in that delightful rural pastime sometimes jocularly referred to as "Gee-hawing old Beck," the principal implements employed being a mule and a plow. However, he added, as he had no choice in the matter, he would put the gentleman to work—which he did.

Bill's first work in the order department was to enter all orders received in the register, in which was written the date and number of the order, and the name and address of the customer. In fact, the man in charge of the order register was supposed to keep track of all the orders in process of being filled, and to jog up the stock room men a bit when a shipment was delayed. It took Bill just three months to get tired of turning and re-turning the pages of the immense book in his charge, and he cast about him for a remedy for this—to him—unnecessary labor. He hit upon the card system, which was at that time just becoming fairly well known, and rigged up for himself a home-made card cabinet, in which he placed a card to represent each order being filled. It was his idea that, as soon as the shipment had been made, to file away the card representing the order, indexed by the names of the customers. He went to the manager with his sample outfit and received permission to put it into use. But it soon developed that this new sys-

tem made the work so simple that another one of the clerks could handle it in addition to his own work, and so they sent Bill down to the mailing room.

Bill stayed in the mailing department four days, and one of these he spent down in the shipping room, making some cabinets of pigeon holes. When he installed the cabinets, which provided a pigeon hole for each regular customer, and had received permission to put into effect a rule that all mail for each customer should go into his pigeon hole and then into one envelope each day, saving not only time, but stationery and postage, the head mailing clerk decided that he didn't need an extra man after all. He called Bill out to one side, gave him his blessing and a large, black cigar, and sent him back to the order department with his compliments to its manager. Bill gave the manager the cigar, and the manager gave Bill a job making out invoices.

At that time the firm had a very simple invoicing system, which consisted of merely making the invoice, in duplicate, from the stock-room filing records; the duplicate invoice was the house's permanent record of the sale. Bill wrote out invoices until he was threatened with the writer's cramp, then his fertile brain became busy again. After pondering the matter for a time, he went to the manager with the suggestion that, since it was necessary to copy each order to get the stock-room filing records, he might as well make two additional carbon copies at the same time, the first to be on a regular invoice blank. The catalogue price of each article should be shown on all of the copies made, but the extension columns would be left blank. When all the shipping tickets were received, showing the goods sent, and those not in stock, he would fill in on the first and second sheets, in the extension columns, the charges for the article shipped, and write the word "Out" when the article was not sent. By this plan, Bill figured, he would save himself an immense amount of work, and still leave a job for him to hold. The plan seemed feasible, and it was tried. It worked well; so well, in fact, that they

found they could get along without Bill, and the manager of the order department sent him over to the head accountant with the suggestion that he, the accountant, might as well resign and give Bill his job right away, for he would get it sooner or later anyway. The head accountant was willing to risk it, and Bill started in with a vim to learn bookkeeping before the lazy bug settled on him again.

In the five years that followed his move to the accounting department, Bill held almost every clerical position that the firm had to offer, short of a department managership. A great fellow, he was; always planning some way to cut down his own work, and never failing to cut down the company's expense account at the same time. It was Bill who pleaded for the adding machines, the billing machines, the time recorders, filing cabinets, and all the various devices that lessened our work by a fourth, and doubled our efficiency. It was Bill who, when out of a job one time, created the position of "Trouble Finder"—the man who goes around the house and turns off all the unnecessary lights, cuts off the heat that is not needed, and, by watching all the seemingly insignificant little expenses, saves the house twice his salary every month. But Bill lost even that place, for when the head of the order department died, the old man called in William Sickles and made him department manager.

I was sorry to lose track of Bill when I left the firm and moved to a distant city; I was interested in watching his lazy, resourceful progress. So when, last month, I happened to be back in the old town again, I went around to the place to shake hands with the few of the old-timers who were still in the firm's employ. One of the boys obligingly took an hour's time from his work to show me around the store, and I became so interested in noting the many improvements that had been made in the twelve years since I had left that Bill's fate completely slipped my memory until my friend and I stood chatting for a moment as I prepared to leave.

"By the way," I asked, "what ever became of that good natured cuss we had around here when I left—Sickles, I believe his name was; we called him 'Lazy Bill,' you know."

My friend laughed and looked at me queerly. "Come here," he said.

He led me back into the house and down the long corridor that separates the accounting department's rooms from the offices of the buyers. Past the book-keeping rooms we went; past the order department; past the mailing rooms, and clear to the end of the hall. Then we stopped. My friend pointed ahead of us.

"There's your answer," he said.

I looked at the door indicated by his finger, a massive one, of handsomely stained oak and glass, and then my mouth opened involuntarily from surprise, for there, in gilt letters, modest in size, but brightly shining on the glass of the door, I read this sign:

"OFFICE OF WILLIAM SICKLES,"

and under it,

"GENERAL MANAGER."

If you like a moral to a story, perhaps you can find one in this; I don't know. I haven't tried. Maybe you can find several different kinds of morals, so that you can have just the kind you want—suit yourself; it's a case of "you pays your money and you takes your choice."

THE TRUTH PREVAILS IN SHADYVILLE.

BY EDWARD BLOMEYER.

Illustrations by Pearse Ennis.

"NINETEEN hundred an' thutty-three dollars an' seventeen cents, I make it," announced Silas Gooble, wetting his pencil and laboriously marking a sprawling figure three beneath the long column of figures before him; "what do you git, Hi?"

"I reckon you're right, boss," replied Hiram, his lanky bookkeeper, and the chief clerk, delivery boy and man of all work of Gooble's General Store, squinting at his own figure-covered page, " 'cause that's what I git, to a cent; nineteen, thutty-three, seventeen."

Mr. Gooble leaned back in the rickety office chair and absently fingered his scraggly beard. "That's a hull lot of money to have out in book accounts, Hiram," he remarked thoughtfully.

"Yessir, 'tis that, sir," assented Hiram.

"Ef I had that in cash, I could discount all my bills, Hiram," gloomily continued Mr. Gooble.

"Yessir, I reckon you could, sir." Hiram knew very little about discounting bills, but he knew from Mr. Gooble's look that it was something to feel bad about, so his voice was correspondingly gloomy.

"Ef I had that money, I could raise yore salary, Hiram," went on Mr. Gooble, meditatively chewing the end of his pencil.

"Yessir, you could that, sir!" exclaimed Hiram, his face brightening joyfully at the prospect. This was a matter that Hiram did know something about, and the very thought of such a thing immediately raised his spirits several degrees. He grinned contemplatively and cleared his throat as if to speak further, but the weight of his feelings overcame him, and he lapsed into silence again.

"There is fifty two individuals out there amongst you what owes me money"

Mr. Gooble sat upright in his chair and began turning the leaves of the ledger which lay before him. He grunted despondently several times as his eyes rested upon pages full of long, closely-written accounts. This survey of the graveyard of his cash capital evidently brought him no pleasant memories, for he soon slammed the book shut with a groan.

"Hi," he said with conviction, "we gotter c'lect them accounts."

"Yessir," agreed Hiram, wisely nodding his head, "we gotter do it—that's what you said yistiddy, sir. How be we a-goin' to do it, sir?"

"How be we goin' to do it?" sarcastically repeated Mr. Gooble. "Plaggone it! ef I knowed that, do you reckon I'd be askin' you fer advice? I allowed as mebbe you had some scheme fer——"

"Me?" interrupted Hiram, in a tone of incredulous amazement. "Gosh ding! Why, boss, I dunno nawthin' about it 'tall, exceptin' what——"

"Now, Hi," cut in Mr. Gooble, "you lookey here! Here's all this money tied up in book accounts what's plumb good, ever' one of 'em, but they jest won't pay. I've writ 'em an' I've writ 'em, an' I've talked to 'em ontil ever' tooth in my head is rattlin', but they sticks to their money wusser'n a cuckle burr to a hoss. Now, I've thought it all out; I want that money, an' you've been wantin' a raise in yore salary—an' when you figger out a way to git that coin, I'll be plumb tickel to give you that raise. So it's you to git a hustle on. See?"

"But, boss," expostulated Hiram, "I——"

"Hi," chuckled his employer, turning back to his desk with a grin, "you better go deliver Mis' Beasley's coal ile."

Hiram waved his arms excitedly. "Now, boss," he began, "lem'me tell you——"

"Hiram," sharply broke in Mr. Gooble, "there ain't nawthin' more to be said; you go deliver Mis' Beasley's coal ile."

Hiram glared helplessly at his employer for a mo-

"Silas Gooble"

ment, then, picking up Mrs. Beasley's coal oil can, he stalked out of the store.

The next day at noon Hiram, rushing into the store from his dinner, took his surprised employer by the arm and led that wondering gentleman far back into a corner of the room, behind the potato bin. "Boss," he whispered excitedly, "I've got it, by ding!"

Following up the dazed Mr. Gooble, who was backing away in some alarm, Hiram launched into an excited explanation of his scheme.

Mr. Gooble, calming down, listened attentively but somewhat skeptically.

"Where d'je git all that dope?" he grunted, distrustfully.

"You know that advertisin' feller from N' York, what's a-summerin' down to maw's?" explained his clerk; "well, he dished it up fer me last night. Purty good scheme, I think; it'll shore c'lect them bills if anything'll do it."

"But, Hi," protested Mr. Gooble, "it' mought mean some trouble ef any of them old fossils was to git het up about it. I ain't no fightin' man, an' you"—his glance wandered over his assistant's angular form—"goodness knows, you ain't! What you goin' to do——"

"Oh, I got that fixed all right," broke in Hiram, confidently, "you see, there's one of them prizefightin' fellers a-boardin' over to the Widder Blake's, an' I done had a talk with him—he says he'll help. What d'ye think about it, boss?"

Mr. Gooble shook his head rather dubiously. "Well, I dunno," he remarked with some hesitation, "but I

reckon it's better'n no way 'tall, an' I gotter c'lect them bills. Get yore advertisin' man to fix it up, Hi; we'll set it for Thursday week—that's circus day, an' ever' Tom, Dick an' Harry in the hull county 'll be here. An' tell him that when he goes to writin' that advertisement he kin go as far as he likes."

"Hiram"

The circus played against strong competition that day in Shadyville. In front of Gooble's store there had been erected a high platform; on it stood an old desk and several chairs. Long before the time set in Mr. Gooble's advertisement the street before his store was filled with people — a jolly, good-natured crowd, that pushed and jammed and trod on one another's toes for half a block in either direction. Hiram, a list of his employer's debtors in his hand, gleefully wormed his way here and there through the throng, surreptitiously checking the names on the sheet as he went. Then, with a grin of satisfaction, he reported to Mr. Gooble.

"They're all here, boss," he exclaimed; "ever' dinged feller what owes a bill is out there in that crowd! Some of 'em is plumb nervous, too,—their tongues is hangin' out a foot. When be you goin' to start?"

"Right now," replied Mr. Gooble determinedly; "go git yore fightin' man."

It was an hour before the time for the big parade when Mr. Gooble mounted the steps to the top of the stand, an auctioneer's gavel in his hand. After him came Hiram, his lean face broken in twain by an enormous grin; then came Mr. Parker, the advertising man. Following them was a short, broad-shouldered individual, with a thick, bull-like neck and hands like twin hams; this was Kid Collins, of some pugilistic fame. Mr. Collins also wore a grin—of anticipation.

Mr. Gooble walked briskly to the front of the stand and surveyed the expectant crowd with a look of grim determination. He opened the desk and took from it a small wooden box, which he placed on the floor beside him. Then, after a brief backward glance—to assure himself that his rear guard was on hand and all cleared for action—he brought his gavel down upon the desk with an attention-commanding bang.

"Ladies an' gents," he announced, "there is fifty-two individuals out there amongst you what owes me money! I've tried ever' way I know of to c'lect it; I've talked to 'em ontil I was black in the face, an' I've writ to 'em ontil I've got the writer's cramp in both hands an' one foot, an' all I've got out of 'em so far is about a bushel of promises an' enuff hot air to send up a balloon—both of which is all right in their places, but they won't pay bills. The people what I bought the goods from that I sold to these here folks on expectation has took a suddint notion that I ort to pay fer 'em; consequently, I've got to c'lect up or bust up—an' I'll be everlastingly danged ef I'll bust to satisfy anybody! You all saw my page ad. in the Weekly Bugle, an' I'm here to tell you that I'm goin' to do jest exactly what I advertised to do—I'm goin' to sell ever' account on my books to the highest bidder, fer cash, an' I'll guarantee ever' one of these here fifty-two individuals to be plenty able to pay, an' good fer all they owe me. An' while I'm sellin' 'em, I'm goin' to tell you a few things about these particular individuals."

Mr. Gooble paused for breath. He picked up the little box, reached into it, and drew out a folded paper.

"In this box," he explained, "is a bill fer ever' account what's owed me. I'm goin' to pick 'em out regardless, an' sell 'em jest as I come to 'em." He undoubled the paper, adjusted his spectacles, and squinted at the bill. "The first one," he continued, "is Deacon Whipple, an' it's fourteen dollars an' a half."

"Advertisng Feller"

"Deacon Whipple," went on Mr. Gooble, after the sudden excitement of his audience had subsided, "has owed me this bill nigh onto a year. He got the goods under false pretenses, anyway, 'cause he promised to bring in enuff butter an' aigs the follerin' Sattiday to pay fer em', an' 'stead of doin' it he took his stuff over to Happy Holler settlement an' sold it fer cash—an' he ain't been in my store since. This here bill is fer a suit of clothes—the same suit the Deacon's wearin' here to-day, an' when we went to that Odd Fellers excursion last spring he wouldn't speak to me, 'cause he was dressed up better'n I was. Reckon he forgot the clothes he had on belonged to me! Deacon Whipple has had the money to pay this bill, 'cause he bought his darter Sal a parlor organ from a mail order house, an' he sent the cash to git it, an' he bought——"

There was a stir in the crowd, and a tall, elderly man, with a long nose and a reddish, unclipped beard, strode angrily towards the stand. This appeared to be Deacon Whipple, and there was blood in the deacon's eye.

"Here, you, Si Gooble," he bawled wrathfully, "what d'ye mean by runnin' down my character that way? Consarn ye, I come twelve miles today a-purpose fer to pay ye that bill, an' here ye air a-blackguardin' me afore the hull township! What d'ye—"

"Now, deacon," sweetly cut in Mr. Gooble, "don't you go an' fret yoreself—the truth is a moughty good

"Kid Collins"

thing sometimes, ef it does pinch a bit. An' you might as well calm down, 'cause you wont have to fight nobody to git to pay yore bill; just step up here on the platform an' Hiram'll take yore money an' be tickled all over to git it."

"Ef there's any more of you out there what wants to pay me what you owe me," announced Mr. Gooble to the crowd, "jest walk up here an' plank down. The mourners' bench is open fer you all; 'as long as the light holds out to burn'—you know the rest of the song. Don't be bashful, now; ain't nobody goin' to bite you!"

While Hiram was writing the deacon's receipt, Mr. Gooble reached into the box and brought out another paper. Before unfolding it, he glanced behind him. Half-a-dozen sheepish-looking men were climbing the platform steps, pocketbooks in hand. Mr. Gooble heaved a mighty sigh of relief; the scheme was working.

"The next gent on the docket," he announced, "is Sam Hickey, the hoss-trader; fifty-three dollars fer groceries. It shorely seems to me that after I kept Sam Hickey's fambly from starvin' to death fer three months, he ort to be willin' to pay fer the grub. I'll jest tell you a few things——"

The threatened disclosures were cut short by a sudden commotion in the crowd. A big, burly man, with a wide-brimmed white felt hat pushed far back on his perspiring forehead, scrambled furiously over the people nearest him, in a frantic effort to reach the platform, his big fists doubling and undoubling spasmodically as he advanced.

"You will, will yer?" he blustered. "You'll tell a

few things, will yer?—you bald-headed old pecker-wood! I'll show you ef you kin talk about me that way! Lem'me by, there—git outen the way! Lem'me at him!''

''Silas Whipple''

This was Mr. Collins' cue. Slipping silently from his seat, he was waiting at the bottom of the platform steps when the angry Mr. Hickey made his tempestuous arrival. Mr. Collins said nothing at all—he just grinned. Mr. Hickey found his way suddenly barred by the stocky little pugilist, and he put out a brawny arm to brush the obstruction aside—then he had the surprise of his life. Mr. Collins positively refused to be brushed; instead, two solidly built arms, all muscle, shot out, and one of them pinned Mr. Hickey's right fist fast to his side; the other wrapped swiftly about Mr. Hickey's left leg and, with a sudden, jarring grunt, that gentleman sat down very hard upon the ground. He looked up in shocked surprise. ''Who—who——?'' he puffed.

''Me?'' His opponent grinned at him impishly. ''I'm Kid Collins, cull—de champeen middleweight of de Nunited States, an' I eats 'em alive like youse! Was youse lookin' fer trouble, cull?''

Mr. Hickey sat upright and, scratching his head, thoughtfully regarded his adversary. ''N-n-o,'' he stammered after a pause, ''I—I—jest allowed as how I'd come up an' pay Si——''

''Oh, dat's it, is it?'' pleasantly inquired the cheerful Mr. Collins; ''well, youse kin sure have de chance, pal.'' He took Mr. Hickey by the arm and, raising him to his feet, gently escorted him up the platform steps. ''Say, pal,'' he remarked to Hiram, ''jest write dis gent a receipt fer what he owes, will yer? De mazuma's burnin' a hole in his pocket.''

Mr. Hickey stood a moment as if undecided. Mr. Collins absent-mindedly doubled his fists,—they were large fists, strong and solid-looking. Mr. Hickey waited no longer; reaching far down into his pocket he brought forth a roll of bills.

The far-away toot of an advancing horn came through the air; the big parade was on! As the crowd wavered, then broke, Mr. Gooble banged his gavel loudly on the desk.

"This here sale will be continued at four o'clock this afternoon," he bawled, "right after the big show. Come one, come all; there'll be somethin' doin' ever' minute. An', in the meantime, ef anybody wants to pay, they'll find me still doin' business at the same old stand."

Mr. Gooble's proclamation bore fruit, for, all during the afternoon, people passed into his store with their purses handy, and passed out with receipted bills. About three o'clock, Mr. Gooble, after escorting a solemn-faced farmer to the door, gave sudden vent to a loud and enthusiastic whoop.

"Hi," he called, "com'mere!"

Wondering, Hiram followed his employer to the office, and there his eyes glued themselves involuntarily upon a pile of currency, mixed with checks and coin, which lay upon the desk. Mr. Gooble, surveying his assistant's surprise with ill-concealed gratification, waved his hand airily toward the money on the table.

"What d'ye know about that?" he inquired facetiously.

Eyes bulging, Hiram stared, first at his employer, then at the money, then at Mr. Gooble again. "Boss —" he began.

"Wait a minute," chuckled Mr. Gooble, "an' jest take a look at this!" He extended a sheet of paper. "Them's the figgers on it," he explained.

Hiram, surprised at first, was astonished beyond articulation now, as he scanned the paper; he gasped feverishly as he came to the total. For a full minute

he gazed tenderly on the figures, then, reverently, he laid the sheet back on the desk.

"By ding!" he ejaculated, impressively, and with feeling. "By ding!" he repeated, and he said it as if he meant it.

When, a little later, the excitement-hungry crowd gathered again to hear Mr. Gooble's tale of woe, that gentleman climbed the platform steps alone. He regarded the upturned faces of his audience with much satisfaction—for Mr. Gooble had long yearned for a moment such as this; then he started in to tell his hearers several things. He spoke at length about the evils of the credit system; he remarked fluently and in detail upon the trouble of collecting debts, and he made a number of most pointed and satirical observations regarding all persons in general who owed anybody, at any time, for anything, and those who owed one Silas Gooble in particular. He went on to say that in the future he expected to sell goods for cash.

"I'm goin' to sell 'em so plagoned cheap that you can't afford to buy anywheres else," said Mr. Gooble. "I'm goin' to fix it so that you'll be losin' money ef you don't come to me an' trade; I am, by heck! An' I'm goin, to advertise 'em, too,—you'll hear more about that later."

"An' now, frien's," concluded Mr. Gooble, "you'll find a barrel of lemonade an' half a dozen boxes of seegars set out in the store; jest walk in an' help yourselves. I thank you fer yore kind attention—an' I reckon that'll be about all."

The people stood, undecided. Then there came a voice from out the crowd. "I thort," it said plaintively, "as how you was goin' to sell some more bills out here today."

Mr. Gooble had expected the question. "Frien's," he beamed, "I axes yore pardon fer not tellin' you, but I plumb forgot. I ain't a-goin' to sell no more bills, because"—he paused, swelling visibly over the importance of his tidings—"because there ain't no more to sell; ever' feller what owed me a bill has done been in today an' settled up!"

THE PROGRESS OF A GENTLEMAN.

BY GEORGE MAHON.

"He'll not stay long," said Tom Mullins, decisively. "He's too much of a gentleman for this office."

"What's your definition of a gentleman, Tom?" asked Calker,—"Cub" Calker, as he was called, not by reason of his being of a tender and unsophisticated age, but because he had served but a paltry two years in the office where the rest of us had worked for what Tom Mullins would term "a crow's age." Cub was always getting himself into trouble by asking impudent or foolish questions, on which occasions "the office" individually and collectively would proceed to verbally sit upon him.

"Listen to the innocent! What's a gentleman?" jibed Hughes.

"Did you ever see one?" queried Watson.

"Why yes, I've seen one or two," responded Cub, "though, now that I think of it, not among the company here assembled. That, however, was not my question. What I want is simply Mullin's definition of a gentleman."

Tom looked Cub over very deliberately from head to heel before deigning to answer.

"Well then, sonny, listen." Tom's manner was most self-satisfied and condescending. "A gentleman is a fellow who has been pampered and waited on, and who has been away to college and learned a lot of things that are of no practical use. He can talk about history and politics and art, he can dance and play golf; he feels as much at ease in his dress suit as you do in your working clothes; he always wears good clothes, even if he doesn't pay for them; he generally has a big idea of himself and the girls all think he is just lovely; but when it comes down to doing hard, actual work, he can always prove an alibi."

"Good. Very good, indeed!" commented Cub.

"That puts us out of it, sure. Imagine a man feeling comfortable in a dress suit! I never could. And imagine Hughes talking art. He couldn't tell a landscape from a fire-escape. And wouldn't Watson look cute playing golf? You'll never make it, Cummings, for when you talk politics you make us all wonder whether it would be better for us to commit suicide or simply to murder you. But Tom, old chap, there's hope for you."

"Think so?" asked Mullins, half pleased, yet cautious.

"Certainly. You possess at least one qualification. Whenever there is work to be done, your alibi is——"

Cub was gone. As the door slammed behind him it arrested the flight of Tom's ruler and paper-weight, hurled with murderous intent. As Tom recovered his property, Cub's laughter floated up to us, while our own mirth was increased by Henderson's sage remark that a gentleman never threw paper-weights, bricks, bottles or cuspidors, maybe, if the occasion required it, but never paper-weights. And then, noticing that the clock hands indicated ten minutes past six, we made a rush for our hats and departed.

As I walked homeward my thoughts turned involuntarily to the man who had been the occasion of Mullin's remark. Unquestionably he had the appearance and manner of a gentleman. How self-confident, yet courteous, he seemed as he stepped into the office and inquired for Mr. Harley.

"Somewhere about the works," Watson replied shortly.

For a moment, silence. Then the stranger asked, "Had I best go look for him or wait here?"

"No one allowed through the works," grunted Watson.

Then it was that Cub's impulsiveness broke out. Seizing a chair, he lifted it over the railing, at the same time saying, "Mr. Harley will be in shortly. Won't you sit down and wait for him?"

"Thank you, I will," replied the stranger, and he

did. For two long hours he sat silently, patiently, until at last the chief came.

"That's him," volunteered Cub in a whisper. The stranger thanked him with a nod, rose, removed his hat and stepped forward.

"Mr. Harley?"

"Yes."

"My name is Cortright. I have a letter from Mr. Clarke directing me to report to you."

"Ah, you want a job?"

"I do. I have brought some testimonials from my former em——"

"Oh, never mind that. I don't need any more help. Office full now. Crowded for room. But Mr. Clarke has instructed me to put you on and give you a trial, and what Mr. Clarke says goes in this establishment. When can you start?"

"At once."

"H'm. Four o'clock. Not today. Report here at seven o'clock tomorrow morning."

"All right, sir. Thank you."

"No. Don't thank me. I am merely following directions. Now, see here. I don't know what you're to get or anything about it. Mr. Clarke simply says to give you a trial. He will decide on your salary, I suppose, when I report to him about you."

"Oh, that is all right. I guess it won't be so heavy I can't carry it home," smiled Cortright.

I held my breath, for none of us ever dared essay a joke in old Harley's presence. But now the chief actually laughed—a harsh, rasping laugh that sounded not unlike the rattle of rusty chains.

"No, you can bet it won't be," he let out, and then suddenly recovered his dignity. Glaring about the office he frowned portentously at everyone who met his gaze. Then he stalked majestically to his desk and from there flung Cortright a surly, "Report at seven sharp."

"All right, sir. Good afternoon," and Cortright was gone.

The next day saw the complete disproval of Mul-

lin's theory. The first to arrive was Cortright, who had a cheery "Good morning" for every man as he arrived, and as soon as old Harley appeared, Cortright was by his side inquiring what he should do.

"Cummings," commanded the boss. I hastened to attend. "Take Cortright to your desk and instruct him in your work. Our desks are all taken, Cortright, and there's no room for another, so you and Cummings must make shift at the same desk for a while."

Was this man some favorite of the higher powers, that old Harley felt constrained to make explanations to him? Or was it the man's own personality that compelled from others the same courtesy he accorded them? Later on we knew, but at the first our thought was, "Favoritism."

Now, the position I filled was a source of some pride to me, for I had been obliged to serve long and arduously at all the lower desks and to wait my turn in the slow moving line of promotion before I attained to it. I could hardly have overestimated the importance of the work, but I felt that I must have greatly overestimated its difficulty when I saw how quickly Cortright picked it up.

"Ever do anything like this before?" I asked.

"Never."

I could scarcely believe it. A glance at the work, a question or two, a second of thought, and then Cortright's pen would begin to move. And how it did move! Standing at the extreme end of my long, high desk, taking up so little room that I seemed to have as much space to myself as ever, Cortright wrote and figured as I had never seen man do before. His penmanship was good and he wrote rapidly, while at figuring he was remarkable. He was full of short cuts and many calculations he would do mentally before I had set down the first figures for the computation of them. I soon saw that within a few days' time Cortright would be able to do the work of my desk better than I could do it, and a most un-Christian spirit of resentment took hold of me. But early in the after-

noon my cup of bitterness became full to overflowing. About two o'clock old Harley burst in, crying sharply:

"Cummings, you'll have to get the time sheets and come out into the shop. That fool, Derry, has got himself hurt and gone home. There's been no time taken this afternoon and you'll have to work it up. Let Cortright do what he can here while you're away."

Down came my pen with a force that sent ink spots flying in every direction; into the drawer went my sheets crumpled and mussed; and slam went the drawer shut with a slam that had capsized the ink well but for Cortright's quick grasp to save it.

"Too bad, old chap," said he. "Hope you're soon out of it."

But I answered not, for my soul was filled with wrath. Grabbing my hat and a pad of time sheets, I fled out into the shop, whither old Harley had preceded me. And there, amid the banging of the heavy hammers, the constant thudding of the rivet machines and the rattling and rumbling of the great cranes as they ran to and fro overhead; there among the grimy machinists and the sweating, panting "hunkies," I put in what seemed to me the most miserable afternoon of my existence. How well it came back to me, the joy I had felt at being promoted from this same time-keepers' position! How proud I had been to become the newest and most insignificant of Harley's office force. Emergencies like the present had arisen before, yet never had I been called upon to leave my desk and "take time." But now—

When I returned to the office all had left save Cortright. He sat upon my high stool, leaning back against the desk and facing the doorway. In his mouth was a cigar, the first whiff of which convinced me it was of a different brand from what I usually smoked. A picture of graceful ease he was, and there by him on the desk lay, fully completed, the large "Daily Report" sheet, which was at once my pride and my despair.

"Through with it at last?" he asked, pleasantly.

My reply was more forcible than it was relevant or civil.

"Beastly job, I imagine," he commented. "Will you look over this report and see if it is all right?"

In form and appearance, it certainly was. As to the correctness of the figures I had no doubt.

"Who showed you?" I demanded.

"No one. I had an idea of the drift of your work from what I saw this morning, so all I had to do was to hunt up yesterday's sheet, see how you carried the work and do the same with this. Does it seem to be all right?"

Why ask? He knew very well it was all right, as well—nay, better done than I could do it. I grudgingly muttered assent.

"Well, good night, then. I hope Derry will be back tomorrow."

Why should he hope so? If he could fill my place for a few days, the quality of his work might insure his being retained there, while I—well, I suppose I should go back to time-keeping. Such was the justice of the world in general and of the Carleton Iron Works in particular, I reflected.

For a week Derry remained away and I took his place, while Cortright took mine. Every night he would wait for me to examine the report. I remonstrated against this, telling him he was quite competent to do it, but he shook his head smilingily.

"It is your work, you know," he said. "I'm only your understudy, and must submit my work to you."

I refused to look over the sheets after this, but he waited for me just the same. One evening I came in quietly and went into the little wash room just off the office to clean up. Cortright neither saw nor heard me. A moment later a burly "hunky" entered and asked some question in broken English.

"I really do not know," Cortright replied, "but Mr. Cummings will be here shortly. Probably he can tell you."

The "hunky" growled something I could not catch,

opened the gate, walked over to Watson's desk and began to fumble through his papers.

"Look here, my friend," said Cortright; "do you see that sign? You're not allowed in here. Step outside and wait for Mr. Cummings."

"No wait," growled the hunky.

Cortright bounced from his stool. "Get outside or I'll put you out," he commanded.

"You no put me out. You go to——"

Just how it happened I could never tell, but the next second the "hunky" was over the railing and in a heap on the floor, thrown there by a slim youth twenty or thirty pounds below his weight.

"If you attempt to come back I'll break you in half," said Cortright, cheerfully. And I have no doubt that he would have done so, but at this moment I stepped into the office, answered the man's question and saw him out.

"How did you do it?" I asked. "That fellow is much heavier and looks twice as strong as you."

"He probably is. It was not a case of strength,—just a case of know how."

And so it was ever with Cortright. Whatever his task, he seemed always to have the "know how."

When Derry returned, I resumed my own place and Cortright was set to help Mullins, whose work was behind.

"Guess that will keep you amused for a few days," commented old Harley. But so great was Cortright's speed and so much increased was Mullins' own effort, unconsciously stimulated by Cortright's example, that by evening Tom's work was "up to the minute."

"What do you think of your gentleman now?" asked Cub, as we walked homeward together.

"He's a smart fellow," Tom replied. "But we must not forget he's here simply on trial. After he is assured a permanent job, you'll see that his daily life will cease to be one continuous performance of grand-stand plays."

"Tom, I wouldn't have your disposition for all the wealth of Carnegie," retorted Cub.

A few days later came the day on which the most reluctant of us went cheerfully to work,—the fortnightly pay day. About ten o'clock a messenger from the cashier's office came in and proceeded silently to lay each man's envelope upon his desk; and each of us, hastily and with an assumption of indifference, crammed the envelope into his pocket, only to extract it again the first moment he was sure of being unobserved, rip it open, count the contents and place them lovingly in his pocketbook. Just why we did this I cannot say, but it was the invariable custom of every man in the office.

"Your name Cortright?" the messenger demanded of our new recruit.

Cortright assented. Then, making no motion to take the envelope extended to him, he asked, "What is it?"

"Why, your pay envelope, of course."

"Just take it back again and put it in the safe for the present, will you?"

"What for? You had better take it."

"I prefer not to take it."

"Well, I'm not going to take it back, at any rate." The messenger was getting angry.

"You may do as you please with it," replied Cortright, coldly, as he turned again to his work.

The messenger stood undecided for a moment, then stepped over and laid the envelope on Harley's desk. A moment later the chief came in.

"Eh! What's this?" he cried. "Cortright, I guess this envelope is yours."

Cortright stepped briskly over to him. "I suppose the messenger laid it there after I declined to take it," he said.

"Declined to take it! Are you crazy?"

"If you please, sir, there has been no agreement with me as to salary," Cortright explained, with a smile. "Until some agreement is made, I prefer not to accept any payments which may or may not be satisfactory."

"Young man, you are likely to accept whatever payments this concern offers you," bellowed Harley.

"Probably I will." Cortright was neither frightened nor angry. "But I claim the right of being consulted first. If my ideas regarding salary do not coincide with those of Mr. Clarke, or whoever has the deciding of it, it is more to the purpose if I kick before accepting a payment than if I do so afterwards. Will you tell me the rate at which that payment is figured?"

"Don't know," growled Harley.

"Will you be so kind as to open the envelope and see?"

"Open it and see, yourself."

"I beg to be excused."

I glanced cautiously at the boss, expecting an explosion. Harley's temper was never angelic; and when aroused to wrath he was sublimely terrible. At that moment he looked as though he were about to devour the calm, smiling, yet respectful young man who stood before him. Suddenly his face relaxed.

"Well, I'm damned!" he exclaimed. "Get back to your work."

On the following Monday morning Cortright was not at the office when we arrived, but old Harley was, and he glared so balefully at each of us as we came in, at the same time glancing ostentatiously at the clock, that every man sought his own desk speedily, and plunged at once into his work. As soon as the chief left for his daily tour of inspection around the works, each of us turned involuntarily to the others and asked, "Where's Cortright?"

Nobody knew, but before we left that night we had startling news of him. The six o'clock whistle had blown; the thud and clang and rattle of the great shop had subsided; the tired, grimy toilers were issuing from its doors on their way homeward, and we were just preparing to follow them, when we were arrested by a word from old Harley, who, in defiance of his usual custom, was still at his desk.

"One moment, gentlemen," said the chief, and at so extraordinary an address from that grim official, every man stood as though rooted to the spot. "This

morning I received a call for a clerk from the General Office. You know they are rather particular up there."

Didn't we know it! On the last occasion of such a call Mullins had been sent up, he being senior clerk in point of service. But at the end of a three days' trial he had been sent down again in disgrace, whereby the prestige of our office was greatly reduced.

"I sent up Cortright, for two reasons," proceeded Harley. "One, because I can best spare him, he having no regular desk here; the other, because he seems to possess several of the requisite qualifications of a good clerk, not the least of which is punctuality,—a fact which it will be well for you all to bear in mind. Good night, gentlemen."

For several minutes we walked in silence. For once Mullins could say nothing. He had had his chance.

At last Cub blurted out, "Serves him right!"

"I hope he'll suit them," I added.

"Of course he will," cried Tom. Such namby-pamby, soft-spoken fellows as he always do suit. He'll know how to toady and curry favor up there."

"Toady! Why, he has more independence and nerve in a second than you'll have in your whole life," replied Cub. "Just look how he stuck out about his pay——"

"Oh, of course, that episode appeals to you," sneered Tom. "To win your admiration, it is only necessary to perform some such theatrical piece of business as that."

"Well, if he has in any way won my admiration, it is more than you have ever done."

"For which, believe me, I am duly thankful," was Tom's retort, as he left us at the corner of his street.

Some two weeks after this, old Harley called me to his desk.

"They need another clerk up at the General Office," he said. "Ball says to send you, if I can spare you, which means I must spare you. You will report there at once."

"But my work here," I said. Surely my place could not be filled at a moment's notice, I thought.

"Oh, we'll make shift to manage that. Go along and good luck to you." Old Harley was never disconcerted. I verily believe that if every clerk in his office had suddenly dropped dead, the old man would have "made shift" to get the work out somehow just the same.

At the General Office I found all in confusion. Workmen were tearing down the partition that formerly separated the chief clerk's office from that occupied by the billing department. Desks were being moved and everything was being rearranged. Quickly I learned that Mr. Clous, the chief clerk, had been stricken down with an incurable disease, and that his office was now to be consolidated with the billing department, all under the head of Mr. Ball, heretofore chief of the latter. When we were settled I found that Ball had assumed Clous' old desk, while Cortright had taken the one just vacated by Ball. And with the desk, he had taken on practically all of the work formerly done by Ball. I also noticed that whenever Ball found himself in difficulty, as happened not infrequently, owing to his unfamiliarity with the new work, it was to Cortright he invariably went for assistance. The man who had been Clous' assistant apparently resented having Ball replaced over his head, for, instead of trying to make things run smoothly for his new chief, he seemed to try deliberately to multiply his difficulties. So it came about on the very first day of the new order that the former chief clerk's assistant was relegated down to the place of a minor clerk, while Cortright occupied the position of right-hand man to Ball. And I, having been passed by Cortright at a single bound, felt no little satisfaction in seeing him pass others as readily.

I waited that evening for Cortright, he being, as usual, the last to leave his desk.

"I have a suspicion that I owe this promotion to a kindly word spoken by you," I said. "And if you will permit me to thank you, Mr. Cortright——"

"For the convenience of my friends," he interrupted, "I was christened Frank."

"Well, Frank, I am very grateful to you."

"Don't speak of it, old chap. I only told the truth about you as I know it. You deserved to come here ahead of me."

But I could not listen to that, knowing it to be untrue.

CHAPTER II.

When I became familiar with the work in my new position, I was surprised to find the methods prevailing in that office were very antiquated. In handling the work that had formerly pertained to Clous' office the utter lack of system was appalling. Cortright soon suggested several improvements, but Ball, who lacked decision and initiative, failed to put them into practice.

Our office was next to that of Mr. Clarke, the General Manager, who frequently strolled through our room, watching the clerks at their work. One day he stopped by Cortright's desk for several moments. Suddenly he asked:

"How are you getting on with your new work?"

"All right, sir, I believe."

"Getting familiar with Mr. Clous' system, are you?"

"His what?" Cortright's tone was unmistakable, but the manager did not understand, or pretended that he did not.

"'Why, his system, his method," he repeated.

"I was not aware that he had any," said Cortright, calmly.

It seemed like impudence, but Cortright told me afterwards that the chance was too good a one to lose. However, nothing came of it,—at least, not then,—for Mr. Clarke stood for a moment in silence, then walked on.

For some months things moved along in their usual course, and then one day the stenographer who did Mr. Clarke's work failed to appear. A letter came

stating that he was ill. Out came Mr. Clarke into our office.

"Mr. Ball, can any of your clerks do typewriting?" he demanded.

"I can, sir," spoke up Cortright.

"Shorthand?"

"Yes, sir; though I'm a bit out of practice."

"Come along, then. Mr. Ball, I shall need him the rest of the day."

But in an hour Cortright was out again and hammering away at the typewriter so fast that I could not do my work, but must needs sit staring at him in stupid wonder. In an hour and a half more he had his letters all transcribed; in another fifteen minutes Cortright had gotten them signed and was back again at his desk. My own work kept me unusually late that night, and as I rose from my desk Cortright was just quitting his. The other clerks had gone.

"So you've worked at stenography, have you?" I asked.

His laugh rang out loud and clear. "No, upon my soul, I never did. Picked it up, though—home study, you know. I was afraid I'd flunk today, but I carried the bluff through, didn't I?"

"Flunk! Bluff!" I cried. "Don't play the hypocrite to me. You knew very well you were fit and you've just been sitting there, waiting for your chance."

"And if I have, what then?"

"Oh, nothing. Only I don't see how you ever managed to become so perfect without daily practice."

"That reminds me, you've never been up to my rooms. Have you anything on for tonight?"

"No."

"Well, come up, then, and I'll show you my talisman."

I cannot say I was surprised at what I found in Cortright's rooms, for one naturally expected that things of his would be different from those of the common herd. His rooms consisted of a bedroom and one other, which appeared to be parlor, sitting and

workshop combined. In this latter room was a bay window of goodly size, in which stood a couch of ample proportions, overhung with oriental draperies and literally smothered in cushions of all shapes, sizes and colors. Upon the wall hung pictures of men, women, dogs, horses and boats, all mingling indiscriminately together. Above a picture of a most villainous looking bulldog hung a dainty girl's glove; over a photograph of an exceptionally pretty girl was a pair of soiled and worn boxing gloves, while beneath the picture of a sedate and clerical looking gentleman reposed a pair of foils. In one corner stood a guitar and a banjo; in another a typewriter. In the center of a large library table rested a Family Bible, and next to it an open box of cigars. Upon a pile of "Christian Heralds" reposed a copy of "Hoyle's Games," while against the wall stood a cabinet containing wine and spirits, upon which, however, was displayed a card bearing the legend, "To be used only in case of fire." But what interested me most of all was Cortright's books. Histories, novels, and works of science there were, but the majority of them were books pertaining to modern business and its "attendant sciences," as Cortright was pleased to call them. Books on commercial law, books on accounting, on stenography, a large "Business Encyclopedia"; several periodicals devoted to the interests of various trades, all were there, together with innumerable circulars and catalogues of card-systems and loose-leaf book systems.

"This," said Cortright, with a comprehensive wave of his hand, " is my play room."

"And these, I suppose," indicating his books, "are your playthings."

"Correct. And glorious playthings they are. The study of modern business and its methods is a most complex and fascinating one. Once a devotee at the shrine of this art, there is no recanting. My goddess is an exacting one,—no half-hearted worship for her,—yet how generously she rewards her true followers."

Then he dived into his books and began explaining

their purposes with great enthusiasm. And I, carried away by the fascination and novelty of it all, was no less eager than he, so that it was long past midnight when I started for home.

As we parted, Cortright held out his hand to me in his frank, boyish fashion and said cordially, "All my belongings are at your disposal, old chap. If you care to turn up here and make use of my books, you will be very welcome. Come every night if you will."

And so it came about that I became an almost nightly visitor at Cortright's rooms. Many were the topics we discussed, many the researches we made. If I became involved in an intricate problem, Cortright was ever ready and able to help me through it. Acting upon his suggestion, I took up stenography and soon, with his help, I began to make progress. One night, feeling how much benefit I was receiving and not wishing to reserve all the good unto myself, I ventured a suggestion.

"Frank, there is a young fellow of our acquaintance who is full of ambition," I said. "I'm sure he would be mighty glad of such a chance as you've given me. He's a capable chap and is, moreover, a great admirer of you."

"A man of great discernment," he smiled. "Who is he?"

"Cub Calker."

"What, Cub, the irrepressible! Well, I'll ask him up some night."

Procrastination was unknown to Cortright. Next evening Cub was admitted to our circle. I had not misjudged his desire to improve himself, for he entered upon our studies with such zeal that he soon caught up with me.

About this time the business of the Carleton Iron Works increased largely, and Cortright's services as stenographer came more and more into demand, until soon we saw him installed as secretary to Mr. Clarke. A vacancy thus occurring in the office, Cub Calker was brought up to fill it. He soon found favor with Mr. Ball, and gradually came to stand in much the

same relation to him as Cortright had formerly occupied. And Cortright so well availed himself of his opportunities for grasping every detail of the management of the business that when, eighteen months after he became Mr. Clarke's secretary, the Carelton works absorbed another plant and Clarke became superintendent over all, it followed, as a matter of course, that Cortright should become manager at Carleton. Gratification and pride are poor words to describe the sensation I felt when he called me to become his secretary and confidential man.

I felt sure that as soon as Cortright could effect it, a change in our office methods would be made. For a month he made no sign, but one evening when we were at Cortright's rooms, he turned suddenly to Cub and asked, "How would you like to become chief clerk?"

"Why, what's to become of Ball?" cried Cub. "I couldn't push him out, you know."

"I appreciate your feeling. It does you credit," said Cortright, gravely. "But Ball has been offered another position and has decided to accept it. You will therefore become chief clerk. Cummings, you will continue as my secretary, but I shall expect you to co-operate with Calker and myself in reforming our office methods."

Whenever Cortright addressed us by our surnames we knew he was speaking as chief to subordinates. In this mood he was as far removed from us as the sun is from the earth. We realized the gulf which separated us, and sought not to pass it.

Accordingly it transpired that Ball retired and Cub Calker reigned in his stead. And then came the upheaval. The first things to go were the old low desks for the clerks and accountants, they being replaced by broad, high desks at which a man could work more comfortably and to better advantage. Then the old books and files disappeared, and in their place came modern loose-leaf books, card-systems and filing cases, to suit which our entire method was changed, so that within a month we had fewer clerks in the

office, but those few were turning out the work more promptly and better done than ever before. The next step was to advance the salaries of those clerks who remained, whereupon clerks became more cheerful and energetic. Our system worked like a huge clock and the office became a source of satisfaction and pride to all concerned.

During the next two years no material change occurred, nor did any event transpire beyond what might be expected in the ordinary course of conducting a great business; but in the third year of Cortright's management, the United States Steel Corporation was formed, and our plant became one of its integral parts. At first I was a trifle uneasy, fearing that changes whereby I would lose rather than profit might be made; but I soon found that Cortright's management was satisfactory to the higher powers, and as long as he remained at the helm I felt secure.

My fears were re-awakened, however, one afternoon when Cortright summoned me and announced that he was leaving for New York on the 7:05 train.

"I must take someone with me," he said. "Can you make it?"

The question was superfluous.

"What's up?" I gasped.

"Can't tell till I get there." His tone betrayed neither fear nor hope. "Run home and get your bag. We'll dine on the train."

We dined in silence, and in silence we sat and smoked through the long evening hours as the train rushed on. Finally we sought our berths, but little could I sleep, for my soul was filled with forebodings of disaster. Changes would be made, I was sure, and the policy of the corporation tended toward a reduction of expenses. To my mind the conclusion was obvious.

Our train had hardly come to a standstill in the Grand Central Depot next morning when Cortright had me in a cab and soon we were whirling down town through the pulsing heart of the great city. Arrived at the company's offices, Cortright left me in an

anteroom, while he went to consult with someone who was expecting him. I waited an almost interminable time, every moment growing more nervous and apprehensive, and had just about reached the conclusion that my path thenceforth would be down hill, when Cortright appeared in the doorway and beckoned me. Mechanically I followed him and soon found myself standing in a handsome office room, where Cortright, after a hasty word of introduction, left me. So nervous was I that I failed to catch Cortright's words, but the moment I glanced at the man to whom he had presented me I realized that I was in the presence of him who had been chosen to bear the burden of the chief executive office of this giant among industries.

With a smile, the great man rose and extended his hand cordially. "I am glad to know you, Mr. Cummings. Sit down."

I sat. In fact, my knees were so shaky it is a wonder I did not collapse sooner. But as I sat before him I found myself growing calmer. The president sat regarding me for some moments, his eye seeming to penetrate the secrets of my life; yet was there nothing disquieting in the gaze. His very person seemed to exhale a spirit of confidence and strength. Those who came in contact with this man could not fail to unconsciously mould their minds in some measure to his qualities. And he was gravely courteous in manner, as I have ever found those men to be who are really great; for it is only the small-natured, incompetents who never have time for politeness.

"You have been some time at the Carleton plant, I understand," he said at last.

"Twenty-eight years," I replied.

"And you began, I believe, as a time-keeper and have worked up to your present position?"

I nodded assent.

"That is a point in your favor."

He is trying to let me down easily, I thought.

"You are a young man."

"Forty-six," I retorted. I wished I could have said sixty-six. But he waved my answer aside.

"Young men are what we need in some positions," he continued.

Minor positions, thought I.

"We are very well satisfied with Mr. Cortright's management, but——"

Now it was coming! I wondered if I had not better bolt.

"But we need him here."

Hurrah! It was all right, then. Would they keep me here with Cortright? I leaned forward in breathless eagerness.

"It is our wish that the management of the Carleton plant be continued along the same lines as followed by Mr. Cortright. He informs me that you are thoroughly conversant with all the details of his methods. The question, therefore, is whether you will accept the position of manager at Carleton?"

Would I accept it? Imagine St. Peter asking some poor lost soul if he desired admission to Paradise.

"Very well, then," smiled the president, rising. "Hunt up Mr. Cortright now. He will give you definite instructions. And drop in here again before you leave."

* * * * * *

It is not my intention to set forth a list of the difficulties that beset my new path, nor yet to record the blunders that I made,—that there were many of both, you may believe,—so we will come down to an event the memory of which will ever remain with me. The occasion is a dinner to which Cub Calker has bidden us on the eve of his becoming a benedict. At the head of the table sits Cub, no longer chief clerk at Carleton, but superintendent of another plant in a distant city. At the other end sits old Harley, stern and grim no longer, but a genial, mellow old gentleman who has retired to live upon the savings of his years of frugality and toil. Around the board sit Watson, Mullins, Hughes, Henderson, a few other old comrades of former years, and myself. The dishes have been cleared away, cigars lighted, and Cub Calker rises to address us.

"Boys, I have a letter from one I had expected to be with us. He says:

"I cannot tell you how disappointed I am at being unable to attend your farewell dinner to the friends of your bachelor days. I had expected to be present, but the stern finger of duty is pointing me in another direction, and I may not disobey. But, while I cannot be at the dinner, I shall surely arrive in time for the wedding. I would come clear across the continent for that event, and I shall expect no less of you on the occasion of my own wedding, which will occur at no very distant date. Some New York society bud, did you say? Wrong, my boy. She lives in dear old Carleton, the home of my youth, wherein rest the sweetest memories of my life. I shall defer my congratulations until I can again grasp your hand. Remember me to all the boys. God bless you all.'

"I need not tell you the writer's name," goes on Cub. "He is the one who, above all others, we are proud and happy to call our friend,—the man whom we have seen rise from a small beginning to the position which his genius and sterling worth entitle him to occupy."

"Genius nothing!" breaks in Mullins. "Why, the man is simply——'

"Shut up, Tom!" commands Cub. "We all know how steeped your soul is in pessimism. Enjoy your own sordid thoughts if you will, but don't inflict them upon us."

And now old Harley is on his feet, wine glass in one hand, the other raised to command silence.

"Gentlemen," he says, "I rise to propose a toast,—toasts, I was about to say, but as I am an advocate of abstemiousness I shall name them together and let you drink them in one glass. Old codgers like myself take great pride in watching the successful careers of those with whom we have labored, whom we have helped to guide, in their youth. I count no man more fortunate in his young friends than myself. May the futures of these men be no less glorious than their past and present. Our interest, our good wishes, our affection go

ever with them. Gentlemen, I give you Frank Cortright and Leonard Calker,—the one as true and loyal a gentleman, the other as brave and bonny a lad as ever trod the face of God's green earth."

With a shout we are on our feet. Our glasses click against each other. We raise them to our lips,—but no, old Harley is waving us down frantically, and we, who have not forgotten how we used to tremble at his frown, sink back into our chairs as he shouts:

"Down! Sit down, you guzzlers. Are your throats cracking with thirst that you cannot wait until I finish my toast? I was about to say, when you so rudely interrupted me, that to these two names I would join the name of him who has shared in their toils, their struggles and their triumphs,—a man whom we have seen rise from the lowest position in the Carleton Iron Works to the very——"

But here, gentle reader, modesty impels me to draw the curtain.

THE BOOKKEEPER: HIS ACCURACY.

A Rough-Edged Satire.

BY ELWOOD S. BROWN.

Illustrations by Parkinson.

THE bookkeeper views life from two sides, the debit and the credit. Instinctively, and usually unconsciously, every little sight he sees and every little act he performs is labeled "debit" or "credit." Thus, a hairy, mangy, rib-protruding cur, yelping at the height of his miserable lungs, is a "debit" dog, while a powerful, handsome, massive St. Bernard may be called a "credit" canine. Considered in a larger and more personal way, the bookkeeper's daily life may be divided along similar lines. When he goes to bed in the wee, small hours of the morning, walking like a question mark; when he awakens with a splitting, cracking headache, necessitating that great alleviator of modern civilized suffering, the ice pack, when he acquires the dark-brown, Godless taste in his mouth, making all food seem like putty mixed with sawdust and flavored with linseed oil; when he goes down to work, dragging his limbs along as if they weighed a ton; when he makes a faint-hearted effort really to do some work and finds his mind dull and blue, with its energy completely sapped—then he is entering every item on the debit side of his life—his character—his soul. But when, on the contrary, he arises from a deep sleep with the bound of a leopard, goes to his meal with the appetite of a long-fasting boa-constrictor, speeds to his work, every atom of his body alive with buoyant energy, plunges into his tasks with the enthusiasm of a mining stock floater—then, ah, then, the credit side gets the entries.

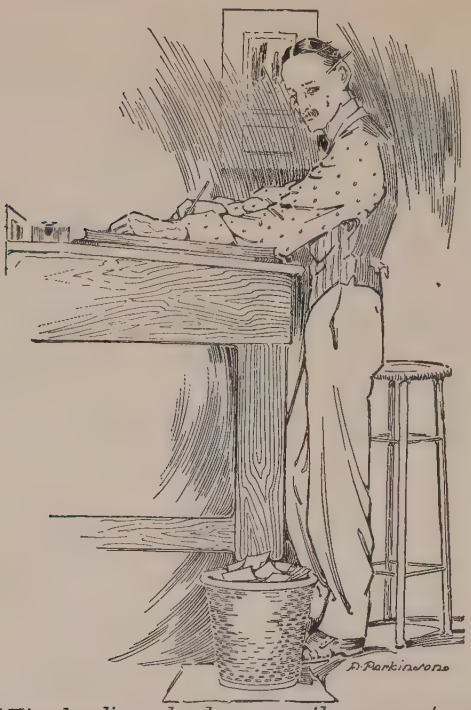
Everyone of us carries some kind of balance, debit or credit. For every blue, morbid, soulless "debit" thought there should be a larger "credit" one of up-

"His method of working is very appealing"

lifting optimism and radiant cheer. And then we should learn to distinguish exactly what things are debit and what credit. A ham sandwich to a healthy man usually is a credit entry; into the poor, miserable dyspeptic it would better not be entered at all.

The bookkeeper is bounded by a ledger, a pile of statements, a long row of figures and a worried look. Most noticeable and constant is the worried look. At any time of the day the casual observer may note the deep, furrowed lines, the wrinkling eyebrows, the nervous twitchings and the many other disastrous symptoms caused by the deadly struggles with the trial balance. The trial balance is a relic of the inquisition. The beginner in the mysteries of accounts would far rather endure the rack with its actual, visible, physical torture than this dreaded, terrorizing, invisible ogre of treacherous figures. The subject is so intense that it is worthy of metaphor. As the thunder clouds of a tornado swoop over the doomed hamlet of Kansas carrying destruction in their paths, so the sable-lined depressions of the trial balance darken and destroy the spirits of a novice in the field of accounting. Is it a wonder that the nerves of so many bookkeepers break down in the long, arduous strain of making the monthly reckoning? It takes the courage of a St. George to conquer in the combat.

In a sympathetic and charitable frame of mind let us calmly and dispassionately analyze and dissect our lovable and confiding friend, the bookkeeper. In figure he is usually slight, with a tendency to stoop. This is due to the fact that his stamina has been directed to the upbuilding of and maintaining a tremendous, intense, rapid-calculating brain. His face, though somewhat drawn, is kindly but incisive; he looks as if he fed on much pepper and high seasonings. He suggests the keen blade of a knife. He looks mental and mathematical rather than vital. His penetrating glance suggests a brain, nourished on fractions, logarithms and syllogisms. Long, lean hands, delicate and refined, indicate the nervous sensitive temperament. He is clean, immaculately clean, physically,



"His cleanliness borders upon the supernatural"

mentally and morally, and the only creature who can handle red ink, a bad pen and a rough edged ruler without blotting the page. His cleanliness borders on the supernatural.

His method of working is very appealing, and many a time have I stood in a state of dumb marvel watching him add a column of figures from three to six feet long. Here is the way he does it, and it is exquisitely fascinating: He takes his pencil between his fingers, draws a deep breath, catches his mental stride and is off. With the speed of a runaway automobile that deft hand shoots up the line, as with superhuman ability he annexes singles, doubles, triplets and certainly combinations of greater number in mad haste. His eyes blink at the top; he relaxes for an instant; sets down a little figure with 42 to carry, and is off again.

How he ever got the 42 to carry I do not know. I never could find it in my head or out, though I added it up at least fifteen times getting anywhere from 27 to 72 to carry. It was the largest single chunk of brain produce ever I witnessed. In desperation I divided the column into ten different installments and came within 3 of the correct solution, which being so small a difference and not worth fighting over, I let go. I would back that man against the best adding machine in the country, for the machine might break down; he never will.

The great, essential, predominating virtue of the accountant is accuracy. Accuracy is the god of the business world, and to him every competent "bookkeep" bows his humble knee in homage. An accountant friend of mine in a bank makes less than one mistake a year; in fact, he divides it between three years on the average, and then his eyesight is responsible. I would match him with perfection and take an even bet. He is so accurate he can walk a block without getting a half-inch deviation from a straight line. His hair is parted so exactly in the middle that a square and compass cannot find a fractional error in the symmetry. His language is so perfectly concise and accurate that you know the exact time and the identical place that anything he ever did or saw took place. He wakes every morning at 6:13 1-2 without effort, breakfasts at 6:43 on 3 1-2 pieces of toast and 1 3-7 cups of coffee, walks to town and reports at 7:57 for business.

The bookkeeper finds it as important to correct an error of three cents as one of two million dollars. Often you will note one laboring away with the perspiration streaming over his face, hour after hour toiling to find an error of two cents. The smaller the mistake the more it worries him. A couple of thousands out of the way is inconsequential, but five cents wrong—heaven help him—is a fearful catastrophe. He will spend $10 worth of time to correct it if it is on the wrong side of the ledger and $20 if the infinitesimal balance is on the right side. A friend of

mine once said to him, "Let it go. Pay it or pocket it yourself, or charge it to profit and loss." A ghastly look came into the bookkeeper's eyes and he clutched at his breast in terror at the thought. The act doubtless would have killed him, for that five cents meant 5-10 of his pride, and he was prouder than Lucifer at his zenith. One day a friend of his added 13 to 52 and made 75. How he did it is beyond my powers of comprehension, but at any rate the bookkeeper went into a dead faint, requiring the smelling salts and chafing of the hands to bring him to. For a time he was threatened with brain fever and muttered incoherently "13 plus 52 equals 75." His moaning was pitiful as his mistakeless brain reeled against the horror.

One of the wonderful features of bookkeeping to the uninitiated (and I regret that I belong to that number) is the vast sum that is carried on the books. A little concern, possibly doing from $4.87 to $6.73 a day had a tremendous account of six figures that required pondering over and wrestling with monthly. Four cents tacked on to $832,756 always looked to me as a trifle out of its proper class. They told me the books had been running since the Declaration of Independence and some of the accounts bearing eight per cent interest.

The next feature of the bookkeeper for consideration is his system. This often borders on the marvelous: "John, please tell me the amount and items of goods sold to Thomas & Sons about six years ago. Give me such details as you have."

John knows his business. He whips out the six-year-old ledger, a like aged journal and cash book, and in less than twelve seconds he has the account, itemized, specialized, notes as to time of payment, etc. It always paralyzes the easy-going business man with wonder. System, system, the regulator of the universe, what a wonder it is! The competent bookkeeper usually knows more about a firm's business than the entire board of directors together. Ordinarily he has every little detail, cost, every tiny item of expense, every molecular, infinitesimal transaction

"A couple of thousand out of the way is of no consequence"

at his systematic command. And he is as certain as death.

A bookkeeper in a bank is more reliable than facts. You can back him against certainty. Did you ever think your bank book was incorrectly balanced? Perhaps you went over it five or six times, carefully and as you thought, accurately, and gradually your ire waxed strong and you determined upon a mild form of murder. You hastened to the bank, rolled out your carpet and endeavored to put the bookkeeper thereon. Coolly and collectedly he looked through your account, said it was perfectly correct and went over the operation with you carefully. You erred somewhere, and triumphantly he won, while you swallowed your pride and apologized as best you could. Don't fool with fate; it is a losing game.

The all-around bookkeeper of the smaller, live of-

fice is a nine-days' wonder. You, as manager, fire in details, right and left, promiscuously and miscellaneously, rarely knowing under what heading they come. He takes in every little one, segregates it, classifies it and puts it in place as accurately as time itself. His mind is pigeon-holed with orderly compartments and he has room for everything without crowding.

The bookkeeper is often viewed in the light of a drudge or a plodder. The question frequently enters one's mind as to whether or not he really can enjoy his work. Wherein does the adding of sevens to sixes and threes to fives give pleasure? Wherein does the never-ending digging, digging for trivialities give zest or joy? Can there be any real interest in making out bills, statements, receipts, balances and the like? What satisfaction is there in knowing that Harry Smith, with an account of $12.85, has paid $7.85 and has $5 to come; that, if he pays, say $2.50 in three months, as he likely will in order to keep peace with the house and get new credit and then orders further goods to the extent of $17.25, his outstanding bill will be $19.75? Where is there anything worth the while in such knowledge? What value is it and of what real profit? Of what use is it to add up row after row of figures, meaningless figures, to plod day after day, month after month, year after year, and then finally drop out for a younger man? Is the game worth the candle, worth the responsibility, aye, worth the reproach that often may be administered?

The answer is this: With all the drudgery of a hard, honest job there is mixed a thrill of pleasure for work well done, for responsibility well taken care of, for knowledge, yes, knowledge of detail, well learned for a struggle fought to a long hard finish. The knowledge that the manager can depend to the last figure on everything quoted him by the competent bookkeeper is a source of real pleasure. A good, loyal bookkeeper thrills when an old account, one of those doubtful, longstanding heirlooms, comes in paid, even with the dust of ages clinging to it; paid in full and the account balances. And there is a thrill in show-

ing a neat, clean ledger, properly red-inked, the figures legible and rounding, bearing witness to infinite care and thoroughness. And there is still a greater thrill when that trial balance comes out right the first time, evidencing difficult work well performed.

This article is intended to be a satire, but our friend, the patient, care-taking bookkeeper, often so little appreciated, is deserving of better treatment. And he does not want to be treated, either, as martyr to the business world.

The bookkeeper in our office is a genius, a mathematical paragon. She can add three rows of figures at a time, multiply by instinct, divide by intuition, and subtract by mental telegraphy. Her figures combine beauty and legibility in a delightful way. She can make two or three hundred statements and as many receipts with one part of her mind and figure out the next payroll with another. She indulges in figures with the avidity of a ten-year-old boy for pumpkin pie. Her recreation consists in adding diagonally and at right angles, and in subtracting backwards. She is a juggler of numbers and has all the short cuts cut in two.

Ordinarily the shortest distance between two points is a straight line—she skips it, starting here and being there with nothing between. Her special delight is the cash book, though she takes great joy in the journal, often memorizing the entire entries for the month. Many a time have I seen her rapturously poring over the outstanding accounts, committing their rates, amounts and items to memory with the accuracy of an Aristotle. She knows them far better than the delinquents, and we endeavor usually to keep them vividly reminded of their disgraces. Joy? She gets a full quota of that substance in its most ethereal form and fairly fattens on it.

Who invented the art and science of bookkeeping? What great, overmastering mind thought out the mysteries of ledger, journal, posting and balancing? Doubtless it has come down from the ages, hallowed in the minds of the prehistoric "bookkeeps" as it is

in those of today. Imagine the old inhabitants of the Stone Age cleaving with chisel and mallet, monthly balances of the large firms of their day. Picture to your minds the writers on parchments preparing roll after roll of figures in their hunt for the proper total. Why did not that great Greek sculptor, Phidias, mould a marble form of the head "bookkeep" of the Athenian age that we of today might look upon a real warrior of old?

May the bookkeeper fight on as the modern hero must, facing every task with a courage invincible, conquering every dry, uninteresting, tasteless task with the enthusiasm born of true bravery and struggling, always struggling upward to the heights.

THE PHANTOM BOOKKEEPER.

BY CHARLES A. SWEETLAND.

"ALTHOUGH not in the same old way," I am still the bookkeeper of the firm of Preston & King.

At one time—it does not seem so very long ago—there appeared to be some danger of losing my position, and being succeeded by a ghost. Fortunately for me, I captured the "spook," or rather was captured by it, and a permanent stop was put upon its mysterious actions.

This is how it occurred:

I had been working quite hard and was not feeling my best when the first visitation occurred. One morning I was too ill (with a splitting headache and bad cold) to go down town, so I succeeded in bribing the thirteen-year-old son of my landlady to send off two telephone messages, one to inform the firm of my inability to perform my usual duties and the other to my physician.

I was in bed two days. Upon the third day I reported to the store with the unpleasant anticipation of the extra work which I would find necessary to perform in order to catch up with the constant grind of business. Imagine my surprise to find that someone had been at my books and that all of the two previous days' business was properly entered, and all of the posting done up to date.

"Brewster, who has kept my books up while I was off?" I asked of the bill clerk.

"I have not noticed a soul touch them," replied Brewster; "Mr. Preston made some entries of cash received, upon slips, and hung them on your file; that is all."

I looked around carefully. I could find no slips.

I asked the stenographer if he had noticed anyone at my books. He said, to his certain knowledge, the books had not been out of the safe, during either of the two days of my absence.

I was properly puzzled.

I looked over, went over, and checked over until I was dizzy, hoping perhaps to find a clue to my assistant, but everything was right as a trivet. The handwriting of the various entries was new to me. I compared it carefully with that of every person employed in the house, but could not find one which was, in any measure, like it. I did not speak to either of the firm, as I could not tell how they would relish the idea of a third party (and an unknown party, at that), having access to my books.

I confess I was worried. However, my work was done, and well done, so I could not, with justice, complain. It was on the third day after this occurrence that something happened which added to my mystification.

About three o'clock one afternoon there was suddenly a number of sharp raps heard, emanating from my desk. They could be heard distinctly in any part of the office.

"What's in your desk, Stanhope, spook?" cried Brewster.

I answered negatively, with a laugh, but, remembering the peculiar occurrence of which I had been able to obtain no explanation, but of which I had kept my own counsel, I was really not quite so positive.

Spiritualism had always appeared to me an arrant "fake"; the most untenable of all "isms," and I made up my mind to discover, if possible, in what natural manner my books had been kept for me during my absence, as I was very loth to believe that there was anything supernatural about it.

The rapping continued, from time to time, for several days. I searched for the cause, but at that time, failed to discover it. In order to test "his ghostship" more fully, I asked for leave of absence to visit some relatives in a neighboring state. It was freely granted, so I left the city Saturday night, and did not return until the next Thursday evening.

You may be sure that the first thing I did, upon my appearance at the office Friday morning, was to look over my books, to ascertain whether or not my

strange helper had kept busy. As before I found every entry properly made, and all of the posting up to date.

I was more bewildered than ever. I thought seriously of asking a year's vacation, letting the "phantom" do my work, but I was afraid, if I put so much labor upon "his highness" he might insist upon drawing my salary as well, an alternative I could not contemplate with equanimity.

All of my inquiries failed to throw any light upon the subject. No one in the office or store had seen a hand upon my books during my absence, and yet the work was done, and beautifully done.

The mysterious rappings occurred at intervals, as if to remind me that my spirit comrade was with me, ever. Oh, how I sympathized with him, when I took this view of it. Bad enough, heaven knows, to be obliged to keep books during life, but after one has shaken off this mortal coil and expects better things, ugh! I determined to solve the tantalizing mystery, if possible, as it was robbing me of sleep, and causing crow's feet, and gray hairs, if I could believe my friends. As everyone united in asserting that my books were never out of the safe during the day, I made up my mind that the "ghost" must do his work at night.

I determined, forthwith, to lay a trap to catch the visitor unaware. I carefully greased my door key, and the tumblers of the lock, as well. I had rubber heels and soles put on my shoes, so that I could creep in without noise, as I had read that spirits were very easily frightened. When all was prepared I became suddenly indisposed again, telephoning the fact to the office, as before.

Of course I was in sufficient good health, by evening, to pursue my investigations. I placed a revolver in my pocket, loaded with "dum-dum" bullets, as I had heard that ghosts were hard to annihilate. When all my preparations were completed I made my way to the vicinity of the store.

As I approached the store I discerned a bright light

shining from the windows of the office. The "phantom" was evidently unable to do good work in the darkness. It was ten o'clock, or perhaps a little before that hour.

I crept around to the side door. Using all of the caution at my command, I inserted the greased key and unlocked the door. The bolt slipped back noiselessly, and allowed me to enter without attracting any attention.

The office was at the rear of the store, so I tip-toed slowly and carefully to the glass partition; then, standing on a low box, I stretched my neck and peered over. As anticipated, all of my books were spread open upon the desk, but there was not a person in sight. I dropped back from my strained position and as I did so I heard a noise which sounded very like a pen scratching over the paper. Now I would catch him. The Phantom was making an entry. I raised myself and looked again. No one was at the desk, although the scratching noise continued. I could not see the floor.

After thinking a moment, I determined to enter the office. As I carefully swung the door open I saw —that which, in my overwrought state, almost transfixed me.

I saw the figure of a man, upon his knees, before the cash safe. His back was toward me, but I could see that the outer doors were open, and that he had mastered the inner combination. It was the clicking of the discs, as they revolved, which I had heard; the noise which had seemed to me like so many pen scratches.

The safe was in the corner of the office, farthest from the door, close to the manager's desk. It stood in such a manner that anyone opening it must do so with his back toward the door of the office.

If this was my ghostly assistant, he was evidently bent upon collecting his salary.

In times of sudden nerve-tension thoughts fly rapidly. As I tried mentally to determine my best course of action, I saw the man reach into the inner safe,

seize a good-sized bundle of bills and stow them away in his capacious pocket. If I raised the alarm the robber stood a good chance of getting away. If I tried to ring for the police, he would certainly escape, and very likely shoot me, in the bargain. If I used my revolver, which I held in my hand, I ran the risk of missing him, as I was none the best of shots, and the light was uncertain. At the report he might (if a spirit) evaporate into thin air. Besides these objections, I had a natural antipathy to shooting a man when he was down; and in the back, too. No, I would not do it.

I finally made up my mind, much quicker than it has taken to tell it. I would try and overpower, and capture the man. His position was such that I would have every advantage. I was quite an athlete, and felt no fear in matching my strength with his. I crept quietly toward him, and, when near enough, made a leap which landed me square upon his broad back.

I found him flesh and blood indeed, and very energetic flesh and blood at that.

We struggled desperately for a time, which seemed, indeed, an age. At some moments it would seem to be impossible for me to continue my ascendancy. The man acted like a cornered animal. He writhed and twisted, trying his best to turn over, so that he might embrace me with, what I felt would be a death grip, should it ever happen. His frantic efforts to free himself or overpower me, seemed to continue for hours, but was probably for only a few seconds, when I felt a weakening in his straining muscles, a giving way in his rigid form, and with a last herculean effort I forced him to the floor, with my knees pressed close upon each side of his back, while my hands tightly compressed his throat from behind, holding his face pressed against the floor. I feared to move lest he should recover his feet, and overpower me. While I had him in this position I felt sure that I could hold him.

What was I to do? I could not hold myself at this

tension all night. I called once or twice, at the top of my voice: "Police! Police!" but the tones seemed to be those of an infant as they reverberated through the great store. If I could only leave him for an instant I would ring the District Telegraph call for the police. I tried, with all my strength, to force him over toward the wall, in hope to be able to reach it. The call was at the side of Mr. Preston's desk, and back of us. I could not make it. His strength, under equal conditions, would have matched mine, if not surpassed it, and it was only my great advantage of him, in position and hold, that enabled me to cope with him at all.

"My God," I cried, " if I could only reach that police call."

What was that?

Surely I saw the door of the closet in which we kept our coats, moving outward. I watched it in fascination. It opened further. Yes, it moves again. Now it was open wide enough to allow the egress of a person, and—

"Let me call the police for you, Mr. Stanhope."

It was a woman's voice. It was a woman's form.

Out into the office she came, revealing to my astonished and incredulous gaze the interesting personality of Miss Louise Preston, my patron's youngest daughter.

Without another word she stepped to the District Telegraph call, adjusted it for the police, and quickly pulled the lever. Just at that moment the noise of an opening door from the outer room was distinctly audible.

"Papa, papa, hurry, hurry! Mr. Stanhope has caught a burglar." She ran to the office door as she called and peered into the store. I had to give my entire attention to my captive now, as he was becoming very restive.

Mr. Preston (for it was he) hurried into the office and came at once to my assistance. It was well that he did, as I was rapidly losing my strength. Together we soon rendered the bold miscreant hors du combat,

and held him securely until the police arrived and took him in charge.

"Well, my daughter, Mr. Stanhope has caught you at it. Eh?"

"I am glad that he came," answered the young lady, "for I was nearly frightened to death."

I looked from one to the other, dazed. Was this the fair "spirit" whom I had been pursuing, and who was responsible for the excellent condition of my books during my absence? I waited impatiently for further explanation.

"What about the robber, my dear?" asked Mr. Preston, as he passed his arm around the beautiful girl's waist. She was trembling, now that the danger was over, and pale with fright.

"Oh, papa, a little while after you left to get shaved I heard a noise at one of the windows. I ran into the closet to watch. I was not afraid; I was just a little bit timid. I saw the man creep into the window and go to the safe. Then I realized that it was a burglar, and became cold as death with fear. I could do nothing. I watched him through the crack of the door, in fascinated silence, as he worked, and made up my mind to give the alarm as soon as he was out of the store. It seemed so long. I began to fear that you would return, and I knew that he would kill you. Finally Mr. Stanhope came from 'I know not where' and sprang upon him. Oh, how I shuddered as they struggled and groaned. I feared—Oh, I feared that he would be killed. Then Mr. Stanhope —Well, papa, he needed some one to ring the police alarm, and I came out and did it. That is all, papa."

"And it is quite enough. I was a fool to leave you, darling, for a moment, but we become careless as we are unmolested and forget our caution. The man must have seen me leave the office and took me for the bookkeeper. He evidently expected to finish his job while I was absent. Now, we must put ourselves right with Mr. Stanhope."

"Please do, papa," said Louise; "he'll think that I am very bold."

"Well, Stanhope, to account for this untimely—or, perhaps, I had better say timely, appearance here, I will say that my self-willed daughter wanted some practical experience in bookkeeping. She had already graduated from the theoretical school. The day your first absence occurred she asked to be permitted to practice upon your books at night, and, as I thought, with my help, she might, perhaps, struggle through it, I weakly allowed her to come. I told her that if she muddled you up, she could not do it again. As you made no complaints, I concluded the work was satisfactory."

"It was all right. It was beautifully done," I answered. "I wish I could have such an assistant with me always."

A bright blush burned in Miss Preston's pale cheek as I spoke, and she answered my look, which plainly said, "May I hope?" with one which as plainly said, "You may."

"I must admit, however," I continued, "I have been somewhat muddled. I began to fear that I was haunted; and I came down here tonight to capture, or dispel, the spirit."

"You have succeeded admirably," said Mr. Preston.

* * * * * *

Yes, children, this is your mama's little romance, which I have promised to tell you so often. That happened a year before we were married, and I went into the firm.

The burglar? Oh, he received the usual long penitentiary sentence. No trouble to convict him, as he was caught in the act.

Later I discovered the cause of the 'spirit' rappings in my desk. A brass-lined ruler was in one of my desk drawers, poised about the center upon a rubber eraser; a mouse had been using it for a runway.

So you see, children, papa's ghost story was commonplace after all. So will all mysterious things become plain, when you understand the cause.

JOHN DAVIS, MANAGER, AND THE NEW PRESIDENT'S POLICY.

BY F. B. LINTON.

JOHN DAVIS, the local manager of the Union Telegraph Co., walked briskly into his office, nodded to his cashier, and lighted a cigar, and plunged into his morning's mail.

"Oh! I wonder what our new superintendent has to say," he thought, as he tore open an envelope marked "Superintendent's Office." He read:

Dear Sir:

Referring to your October reports, I note that your receipts show a large decrease when compared with the same month last year. I also note that your expenses show a very slight decrease. Please explain this, and take at once the necessary steps to reduce the expenses and increase the receipts.

Yours truly,

H. L. BROWN, Supt.

"Whew!" he exclaimed. "He is apparently not satisfied with my management. That last report did make a bad showing."

The Union Telegraph Company was undergoing a reorganization. A new president had been chosen at the last meeting of the board of directors. He was ambitious, aggressive, and bent on making a record. He was selected for the presidency on his record for cutting down expenses and getting work out of men, made while he was general superintendent of a division in the west. Soon after his elevation, he removed a number of men—some because they antagonized his policy, some because they had fallen into a rut, and others on the general principle that it is a good thing to infuse new blood into the company.

He held that the wholesale removals made the men that were retained more industrious. Fear was the prod he used to urge his subordinates to work.

Mr. Brown was appointed a month ago superintendent of the district in which John Davis' office was situated. The old superintendent, who had been in the service of the company for 30 years, was discharged. Mr. Brown had been one of the new president's lieutenants in the west.

John Davis re-read his letter. Summoning his stenographer, he dictated this reply:

Mr. H. L. Brown, Supt.:

Dear Sir—Replying to your favor of the 6th inst., I beg to state that the decrease in receipts shown by my reports is due to a general depression in business in this city. I have secured the business of a number of new firms, and am holding the business of all our last year's customers, but the manufacturers and brokers are not doing as much business this year. I will, however, continue my efforts to increase the business.

I do not think it practical to reduce expenses at this time. The present force could handle more business, but the force cannot be reduced without requiring the men to work unreasonably long hours or impairing the efficiency of the service.

Very truly,

J. H. Davis, Mgr.

When the letter was handed to him for signature, he hesitated.

"That first part is all right," he said to himself, "but the last part will grate on the nerves of the new superintendent, if I have correctly sized up the man. But, no—I won't cut salaries and I won't reduce the force. Every man here from the messenger boys up to the chief operator, has stood by me in my efforts to improve the service and get business, and I will stand by them."

He signed the letter.

As he pondered, after mailing his letter to the superintendent, the recent changes in the company and the probable effects of the reorganization, his thoughts wandered back over his own experience since entering the service of the company. In this same office, 15 years ago, at the age of 12, he began his telegraph ca-

reer as a messenger boy. He recalled with a smile his feeling of responsibility when he started out with his first message, and how elated he was when, on the night of that eventful day, the clerk inspected his delivery sheets and found a signature for every message. Never since had he felt so great a responsibility or enjoyed so much a triumph; not when he was promoted to delivery clerk; not when, after practicing for hours at night, he was put on as an operator; not when he was promoted to chief operator and measured wires for crosses and grounds with an accuracy that delighted the linemen; no, not when three years ago he was made manager of the office.

He knew and was known by every man in the city that did a regular telegraph business. He had carried messages to most of them at all hours of the day and night. Many of them had offered him positions in their offices or factories, but nothing had ever tempted him to leave the telegraph office. Telegraphing fascinated him. He loved the work.

Two days later he received this reply to his letter:

Dear Sir:

Your letter received, and the excuses you offer for the bad showing of your office noted. Results are what we want, however, and not excuses. I am obliged, therefore, to call for your resignation, taking effect the last day of this month. On the first day of next month I will send a man to relieve you. You will turn over to him all the property and money due the company, taking his receipt for the same. Yours truly,

H. L. Brown, Supt.

The color faded from Davis' face as he read the letter. Then his countenance grew stern and his eyes flashed.

"He wants results, does he?" he muttered. "Well, I'll show him a few results."

In a moment he had control of his rising anger, and, turning to his cashier, said: "Tom, make me up a statement of the receipts and expenditures of the office for the last six years, showing a comparison of the last three years with the three years previous."

"All right, Mr. Davis," replied the cashier. "I'll have it for you in half an hour."

Later in the day, with the statement in his pocket, Davis left for Cincinnati to have an interview with the superintendent.

"Now, Mr. Brown," said Davis to the superintendent, after showing him the statement of the receipts and expenses of the office for six years, "that is my record. As you see, the receipts of the office have been doubled in the last three years."

"But the receipts this year are less than last year. How do you explain that?"

"Last year was an exceptionally good year. The brokers and manufacturers did an extensive telegraph business, and I secured a number of new customers. This year they are not doing so much business."

"Well, why have you not decreased your expenses proportionately?"

"I am increasing the efficiency of the service. You will note that the receipts of the office have doubled since I became manager. That's the result of good service."

"Yes, that's good as far as it goes; but our policy is to reduce expenses. Now, Mr. Davis, I have nothing against you personally, but my instructions are to discharge every man who does not co-operate with us in cutting expenses. Your record is good. If you will cut some salaries in your office and get your expenses lower I will recall my request for your resignation. Now, there is your cashier. He is getting more——"

"But he is a good man, and may leave us."

"You can get plenty of men to take his place; we have stacks of applications."

"He has helped build up the business, and it's hard to find a man that will put the enthusiasm that he has into the work. Besides, he stood by me——"

"Well, your chief operator. His salary is higher ——"

"He is a better chief than the average. His experience makes him a valuable man."

"Then look at your messenger boys. They get too much."

"Why, Mr. Brown, I have the best messenger force in the country. You ought to see them hustle for messages. They work overtime, and there isn't anything they won't do for me."

"Well, Mr. Davis, where will you reduce expenses?"

"You will pardon me, Mr. Brown, when I state that I know the conditions in my office and city better than you do. I have gained, and am holding, some of our biggest customers by giving them the best service they have ever had. I know that to reduce expenses, and thereby impair the service, would mean a big loss of business to the company."

"It seems unnecessary to discuss this matter further. I understand, then, that you will not reduce expenses."

"I will not. Good day, Mr. Brown."

When Davis arrived at his office next morning, his first act was to write a formal resignation and forward it to the superintendent. He went through his mail, dictated replies and cleared up his desk.

In the evening he called all his employes into his office and, after thanking them for their loyal support and efficient service, told them that at the request of the superintendent he had resigned.

There were exclamations of surprise and indignation. One of the operators proposed that they all strike. There were murmurs of assent.

"No, no," said Davis. "That would do you harm and would not do me any good. Stay with the company—for the present at least. I may want you to help me later, but don't give up your present positions until you get better ones."

Davis, always energetic, was unusually active during the next few days. He saw all the firms in the city that did a big telegraph business. He called their attention to the fact, which most of them knew, that he had greatly improved the telegraph service from that city. He had secured direct wires to New York and other important cities. The rival telegraph com-

pany had been forced to improve their facilities in order to hold part of the business. He proposed to further improve the service. Did they want faster service and quicker answers to their messages? Of course they did. Then he had a confidential proposition to make. Would they agree to his conditions? After hearing them, many of them did.

Four days before the date on which his resignation was to take effect, Davis called upon Cameron, the local manager of the Commercial Telegraph Co. Although competitors for business, and each keenly alive to the interests of his company, they were personal friends. Cameron, who did not know that Davis had resigned, was dumfounded at the proposition he made.

"I shall have to take that up with my superintendent at Cincinnati before I can give you an answer, Davis," he said, after expressing the surprise he felt.

"But this matter must be decided at once," replied Davis. "Give me a letter to the superintendent and I will go and see him."

The superintendent, however, when Davis saw him, said he would have to hear from the general superintendent in Chicago. Davis immediately set out to see him.

"I like your proposition, Mr. Davis," said the general superintendent, "but as it involves considerable expenditure and a change in wires outside of my division, I shall have to get authority from Mr. Adams, general manager of the company, in New York."

"He is the man I want to see, then," said Davis. "Will you write him now recommending my proposition? I will take the letter directly to him and explain the details."

The general superintendent gave him the letter.

Twenty-four hours later Davis arrived in New York and at once called on Mr. Adams, the general manager of the Commercial Telegraph Co.

Briefly Davis outlined his proposition.

"You say that the leading firms in your city will give their telegraph business to whichever company

you want them to?" asked the president, his manner expressing incredulity.

"I say that they will allow me to place their business with the company that will give them the quickest service. Here are contracts with a number of firms to that effect. Many other firms with whom I did not make a written contract verbally agreed to do so. Now, the substance of my proposition is this—your company is to open two branch offices in the business district, put in the additional wires, and make the other improvements that I have indicated. These improvements will give our city the best service it has ever had. I will then turn over the business that I control. Your receipts in that city will be doubled. I am to be appointed manager of the branch offices, with a commission on the increased receipts."

"But what assurance have I that you can give us this business?" asked the general manager. "Your plan involves the expenditure of a considerable sum."

"My salary depends upon the amount of business I give you. If you are afraid, however, to make the necessary outlay, the other company will consid——"

"Suppose I give you a larger commission—say twice the amount you proposed—and do not make the improvement. If you control the business, you can give it to us any way, and both you and our company will make more——"

"That is not to be thought of for an instant. I promised better service, and it is on that condition alone that your company can get the business."

"What is your estimate of the cost of the improvement?"

"In round numbers $20,000, but as I propose to increase your receipts $15,000 a month, it makes a good investment. You will find the estimated cost fully itemized in these papers."

"Mr. Davis," said the general manager, rising, "I will go over your papers at once and give your proposition very careful consideration. I will wire my decision to the superintendent, who will advise you.

My answer will be awaiting you when you reach home. Good day, sir."

Davis left for home on the first train. He arrived on the morning of the day his resignation took effect. After a bath and breakfast, he hastened to the office—until this day he had always thought of it as his office.

He found a telegram from the superintendent of the Commercial Company awaiting him. It read:

"Your proposition accepted. Install branch offices and superintend other improvements you outlined."

Later in the day he turned the management of the office over to Brooks, his successor. While Davis well knew that Brooks was in no way responsible for his discharge, he could not help feeling that he was a usurper. Their intercourse was, therefore, formal and as brief as consistent with the business at hand. Thus ended his work for the Union Telegraph Company.

For the next week he was a busy man. He opened two branch offices, directed the work of four gangs of linemen who were stringing wires, and made all necessary arrangements at the main office for handling the increased business.

In the meanwhile the superintendent was arranging direct wires to all the principal cities. When everything was in readiness, Davis notified his customers, and in one day more than half of the business of the Union Telegraph Company was transferred to the Commercial Company.

The Union Telegraph Company endeavored to regain the business. Brooks, the new manager, who well knew that the president, when he learned of the decrease in receipts, would want an explanation, telegraphed for Superintendent Brown to come to his assistance.

"I have reduced expenses, Mr. Brown, as you directed," said Brooks, after he had acquainted him with the situation. "But since this loss in receipts they are larger, proportionately, than they were. The office will make an awful showing this month. We will have to fix up some kind of an explanation for the president."

"The president wants results. Explanations won't go with him. We have got to get this business back, Brooks," replied Superintendent Brown.

Together they canvassed the customers who had turned their business to Davis with the rival company. Everywhere they received the same answer:

"You will have to see Davis. He has charge of our telegraph business now, you know. He gives us quick service, too—the best we ever had. Bright young man, that fellow Davis. How did he happen to leave your company?"

A few of the smaller customers, however, promised to give them part of their business. But after thoroughly canvassing the city, they regained only a very small part of the lost trade.

Superintendent Brown returned to his office and thought over the situation. "I will have to offer excuses to the president after all," he thought. "I wonder if he will tell me, as I told Davis, that he wants results, not excuses. Anyway, I carried out his policy in reducing expenses. I believe Davis was right, though, when he maintains that reducing expenses isn't always the best policy. Remarkable man, that fellow Davis! I wonder if I can get him back. I will have to increase his salary, I suppose. Humiliating, too, but less so than to be obliged to explain the situation to the president."

Then he sent the following telegram to Davis:

"Will you accept your old position with us at $600 increase and carry out your own policy? Wire answer."

Two hours later he received this reply:

"Cannot accept your offer. I have just been promoted to superintendent of this division of the Commercial Telegraph Company.

JOHN DAVIS."

THE STRANGE CASE OF CLEMENT ZENT

How Forbes Weston, Business Counselor, Saved a Business, Evolved a Unique but Practical Selling Plan and, by Clever Deductive Work, Unhorsed a Rascal.

BY GEORGE ROCKHILL CRAW.

Illustrations by Ralph Shultz.

CHAPTER I

CONCERNING ATOMS

WESTON looked thoughtfully over the top of his book. It was Ruskin's "Ethics of the Dust," and he had just read aloud:

"You cannot string . . . atoms; but you can put them in a row, and then they fasten themselves together, somehow, into a long rod or needle."

I knocked the ashes out of my pipe and said aimlessly, "And then what is done with it?"

"They work with it," he replied.

"Who?" I asked still aimlessly; and he, in his thoughtful manner, answered, "My clients."

"What do they make?" I asked, interested.

"Money," he replied.

I was just out of college and, upon reaching Chicago, had looked up Weston, bearing a letter of introduction from a mutual friend.

We were seated in his private office beyond which was a reception room, the outer door of which led into the corridor of the building. This door bore the name "Forbes Weston"—that was all.

Our friend had given me no information as to the vocation of Weston, and the latter, so far in our conversation, had not broached the subject.

I was curious to know the line of work in which this tall, well-groomed, intellectual and evidently successful man was engaged, but his bearing was one which commanded and gave a delicate courtesy that precluded the asking of personal questions.

The short winter's day had faded from a readable twilight to a darkness that threw the light from the gas-logs into our faces, bringing out the profiles

"I wept, an erring and an unstrung man"

sharply. It accentuated the appearance of nervous energy in Weston's long, white fingers, holding the "Ethics," and the sagacity of his high forehead, straight nose and firm mouth.

I was on the point of making a remark that would keep the conversation in the same channel, when some one entered the outer room. Weston, in his lithe, quick way, opened the door between, and switched on the electrics, which revealed a man of the executive business type whom I judged to be thirty-five years of age.

The pallor that is born of worry and loss of sleep was upon his face, and his eyes seemed abnormally alert with a harrassed expression, like those of one who would do great deeds but is thwarted at all points in an anxious endeavor to find a logical avenue for feverish energies.

"My name is Alexander Zent," he said quickly, "and I take it that you are Mr. Forbes Weston."

The latter nodded with a kindly smile and motioned his visitor into the room where I was seated. He himself then entered, closing the door behind him.

Weston drew up another chair and both sat down. No introduction was made by Weston, and Zent, evidently thinking me to be a private secretary, made no objection to my presence. In fact he gave me but one searching glance and then, turning to Weston, said: "Mr. Weston, you have saved many a man's business; can you save a life and keep a heart from breaking?"

"Incidentally?" asked Weston, with a little smile.

"Yes, incidentally, if you will have it that way, but, to me, what incidents! The life is my own, and the heart is—my sister's."

"While the business——?"

"Is the Empire Shear Company."

"I will try," said Weston simply.

Zent arose, held out his hand, which Weston grasped, looking keenly up into Zent's eyes. The latter did not falter. After a few seconds he said, withdrawing his hand:

"You may not care to shake my hand when I have told you all, but you said you would try so sincerely that I couldn't help grasping yours."

CHAPTER II.

ALEXANDER ZENT'S STORY.

"When my father died five years ago," he continued, resuming his chair, "he left a fortune of $60,000 in cash, a mortgage note which he had held for that amount having been paid off just before his death.

"The estate was divided equally among my sister, Laura; my brother, Clement, and myself. Previous to that time I was engaged in selling a patent shear invented by myself, and manufactured on contract by an eastern firm. At the time of my father's death my business was growing rapidly. Our legacies were uninvested, and, knowing the possibilities of the shear business, I formed a corporation, calling it the Empire Shear Company.

"My sister invested $15,000 in the stock of the new company, my brother, $500, and I turned into it the old business with its patents, good will, etc., entire, and, besides, invested in it the $20,000 that was left me by my father. I thus have always held a controlling interest, and am the president, treasurer and general manager of the concern.

"My brother has never been actively associated with me, his business being that of buying and selling commercial paper. You probably know, Mr. Weston, that he is quite a rich man today."

Weston nodded as he lighted his cigar, which had gone out.

"My brother is very close, and why he invested in the new company at all is a mystery to me," continued Zent. "He opposed my sister's investment, saying that the venture was a risky one and that we all would most probably lose our money. My brother's nature is a very vindictive and cynical one. He knows but one law, and that is the law of his own judgment.

"My plans for the business included the purchase of ground and the erection of a building, where the shears were to be made complete. Without my sister's money and my own, this could not be done. In fact

we thought out the plans together, and, when the time came, she put in her money against my brother's advice and wishes, offending him deeply.

"He has always called me my own worst enemy because of what he terms my extravagance. My brother never tipped a servant in his life, and at the buffet below his offices he has an arrangement with the attendant whereby he buys regularly one drink in the morning, paying fifteen cents therefor, and another at night for which he pays ten cents, thus getting the two-for-a-quarter rate. I have no desire to speak ill of him, but this will show his two strong characteristics, parsimoniousness, and a total disregard for customs, and of the ridicule and disdain of others.

"He lives most frugally and spends nothing for luxuries as we know them. His luxuries consist of the humoring of his splenetic moods, and he will, after a quarrel with a neighbor, spend many dollars for spite fences and sarcastic newspaper articles, at advertising rates in his town weekly to satisfy his grudges. One of his specialties is splenetic quarrels with public officials over any public improvement that concerns his taxes. These expenditures are his only extravagances. He has no friend in the world, and lives alone within himself at White Forest, at which suburb he has a handsome home obtained by a foreclosure.

"The end of the first year after my father's death saw our new factory completed, and we were, by that time, running at our full capacity. We have always sold our goods directly to the dealer through regular salesmen. During our second year, a strong competitor put out a shear much like ours at what would have been to us a ruinous price. However, he had at large cost installed new machinery of a labor-saving nature that enabled him to make the shear at a good profit, when sold at the reduced price. Our orders fell off at once, and ruin stared us in the face.

"Owing to the new condition of the market and the altered state of the art of shear-making, our plant, in which machinery and equipment represented the

larger investment, would not have, if sold, brought thirty-three and one-third cents on the dollar.

"Because of our large fixed expenses, our assets decreased rapidly and I was using to the utmost the credit extended by our bankers.

"At this time my brother was sojourning in Arizona, his health being very poor. He had never taken any interest in informing himself as to the condition of the Empire Shear Company's business affairs, and I had never acquainted him with the vicissitudes of the company. In fact I dreaded the biting and malevolent sarcasm with which he would receive an account of my struggles and imminent failure.

"I must not fail. My sister's fortune was at stake. For my own losses I cared nothing compared to hers, and to the sinister satisfaction that I knew my brother would take in our undoing. I knew that the vindication of his judgment by our failure and our humiliation would be to him the sweetest thing in life. I must not fail. As a brother I revolted at the thought of furnishing him such an unholy and unnatural revel.

"Night and day two faces were continually before me, alternating through my conscious and subconscious self—the sweet face of my sister with her soft, brown hair and dark eyes, troubling because of my trouble, and grieved by thoughts of Clement's life and his attitude toward her and me with never a thought of her own material loss and what it would mean to her; the other face—Heaven forbid that I, his brother, should describe before men the vision that came to me in those dark hours.

"I resolved that these pictures must never be painted. I determined to save my brother from himself, through himself. In doing so I would save my sister the heartache that impended and the loss that threatened.

"I determined to rebuild our machinery along the new labor-saving lines and to purchase additional machines where needed. The expense would be great. I had no available resources to meet it."

Zent stopped speaking for a moment, and looked with tired and uncertain eyes at Weston, who silent and impassive, sat settled back in his chair, seemingly absorbed in thought.

"I issued," he continued, flushing painfully, "a false and most favorable statement of the conditions of the business of the Empire Shear Company and borrowed upon this without security, at my brother's offices, the money that I needed to complete my plans. You would not care to shake my hand now, Mr. Weston?" he asked slowly, looking up.

Weston frowned impatiently and waved the remark aside, with a quick movement. "Go ahead!" he said sharply.

CHAPTER III.

LAURA ZENT INTERVENES.

"In my brother's absence," resumed Zent, "his manager was required to refer to him by mail for his approval all new applications for loans; but, because of my relationship and my representations as to the urgent need of the business, he made the loan without referring it to my brother. Because of this, upon my brother's return from Arizona, the manager was promptly discharged, and this without my brother's knowing that the statement was a false one." A shadow of remorse and mortification crossed Zent's wan face. He continued:

"Six months after the negotiations of our paper with my brother's manager witnessed the rehabilitation of our manufacturing processes, and nine months afterward found us without sufficient working capital to carry the thousands of dealers to whom we began selling the new output at the new prices, the working capital shortage occurring because of the long time taken by most retail dealers in paying their bills.

"The first note given my brother matured at the end of a year. Things had not worked out as quickly as I had anticipated; there were leaks, perhaps, in our factory management; our accounting system was, perhaps, at fault; besides, our old competitor had be-

gun a national campaign of advertising in the magazines, and again our sales began to fall off.

"The goods we had already put upon the shelves of the dealers of the country did not move rapidly, and we received few duplicate orders. These conditions still maintained when my brother's first note fell due. It was drawn for $5,000.

"The second note would be due at the end of the following year. I could not pay the first, and was then not concerned about the second.

"Again I was face to face with the certainty of my brother's knowing all. I would not allow myself to think of using the money remaining to my sister from her legacy. The risk was now far too great. I could only throw myself upon my brother's mercy, ask an extension of time and try to work out.

"In the little library of my sister's home and mine, on the night that I had resolved to tell him all, I opened a letter sent me by messenger from the president of the bank with whom we dealt. It was a final refusal to extend our credit to the amount of $5,000 additional. The last sentence read: 'As you say you must positively have this money tomorrow, and desire that my final answer be given you today, I am sending this to your home by special messenger.'

"My appeal to my banker was at best a forlorn hope, and I let the letter fall idly to the floor. I sank into a large leather chair where I slept fitfully. When I awoke Laura was beside me, stroking my hair back from my forehead. 'You are ill, Aleck,' she said tenderly, and her little hand seemed wonderfully cool upon my brow. 'I am afraid you worry far too much. Please don't sleep here any more tonight; you'll take cold. Good night, you old dear! She kissed me and left the room! while I buried my face in my hands and wept, an erring and unstrung man.

"The next morning I entered my brother's office. He looked up with a cynical smile from the financial reports upon his desk.

" 'Why is it?' he said, still smiling cynically, 'that people will call upon a man when they know he is apt to be most busy?'

"I stood over him with my fist clinched"

"'I haven't the least idea,' I replied wearily. 'I came to tell you that I cannot pay your note today.'

"'I shall see that it is paid then,' he replied with icy quickness.

"'You will bring suit?' I asked.

"'I shall attach your bank balance,' he said.

"'There is not enough,' I replied.

"A cold, suspicious look came into my brother's eyes. 'There is not enough, and you have known for a year that you have this note to meet? Have you lost or gained during the past year?'

"'Neither,' I replied; 'we have just held our ground.'

"In his deliberate way my brother went to another room and after a few minutes returned. He brought

with him the financial statement that I had made to his former manager. He resumed his seat, studying the paper carefully. After a few moments he said: 'This statement shows an abundance of reasonably quick assets. If you have held your ground, and have made any effort at all to provide for the payment of my note, you must have the money on hand.'

" 'The money is not on hand,' I replied.

" 'Is it not consistent with your ideas of business conduct to prepare for the meeting of your paper?' he asked, with a superior, sardonic smile.

"I ignored his sarcasm, and answered slowly, I tried to meet it.'

" 'Then your statement is——'

" 'False,' I replied in a strained voice—but my brother showed no emotion. He sat there quietly fixing my eyes with his cold, steady gaze and continued unchanged his sneering smile that was made of closed, thin lips, a deepening of the cynical lines about the eyes and a drawing back of that deep Voltairian one which runs from the nose to beyond the corner of the mouth; there seemed, too, to be a trace of enjoyment—No, No! the thought is fiendish; but, Weston, before heaven, it was there.

" 'I suppose you know where you belong?' he asked incisively. I did not answer, but stared at him appalled.

" 'You shall not be free to obtain money under false pretenses long. Perjury does not run in our family, and evil weeds are best plucked at the sprouting.'

"I cringed beneath his biting, accusing sarcasm. Then, torn to the quick, I jumped up and stood over him with clenched fists.

" 'By——,' I said, 'beyond the law, I am a better man than you within it. If I perjured myself, it was because my heart was warm—because I loved and sought to prevent harm to others, not to cause it; not because my motives were base am I beyond the law.'

"My brother made a gesture of impatience. 'Will you kindly cut that out,' he said impudently.

" 'When I am through with you,' I retorted, threat-

ening him. 'You have always been within the law. You were within it when upon a trivial grievance you erected on your own property that high fence which shuts the light of day from the home of the crippled little lady that lives next to you. Your grounds are beautiful, but she never sees them. You have spoiled her view, depreciated her property, and taken away from her life one of the few joys her vision is allowed, putting into its place a monument to the littleness of a human soul.

" 'You have done all this legally—you are within the law. And now that you have a legal right you will try to shut the light of the free day from your own brother, your mother's and your father's son—and you will exult in breaking our sister's heart, for the day that you seek to degrade me I shall take my life.'

" 'You may as well begin now,' he said acidly, 'because the first thing I shall do will be in the interest of justice. I think you know that I am not a weak man. The honor of our family shall not lie in shutting in our skeletons, but in exposing them. However, I have an aversion to a Zent wearing stripes.'

"I was overpowered by his infernal egotism and malignity. Then my spirit rebelled and I rose again, lowering over him. I had no thought to plead with him. Too long had I known his iron will and obdurate heart. It would have done no good.

" 'Sit down. Sit down!' he said impatiently.

" 'Why?' I asked.

" 'Because I wish you to tell me calmly how soon you will be ready for this journey that you have proposed taking, and which I think will be the better way.'

" 'I am ready now,' I said, looking out over the roofs of high buildings to where Lake Michigan glistened in the morning sun.

"Without a word my brother pulled open a drawer of his desk, which was within my reach, and left the room. It contained a loaded revolver.

"I reached for a sheet of paper and penned a little farewell letter to my sister. For four years I had car-

ried a very large life insurance of which she was the beneficiary. I gave her instructions in regard to this; then I grasped the revolver firmly and raised it to my temple.

"A sound of rustling paper under the door arrested my finger, and I heard Laura's voice calling my name. Something seemed to snap within me, and I rushed to the door to strain her to my heart.

"When I opened it she was gone. 'Laura,' I called, but only the threadbare clerks at their desks heard me.

"I picked up the envelope that she had thrust beneath the door. It bore my name. Tearing it open I found the letter of the bank president, which I had received the night before, and upon it was written in Laura's hand: 'Why didn't you come to me, Aleck? Bankers are so cold.' With the letter was a cashier's check for $5,000.

"With the check came reason. It would pay the note, and my brother would be forestalled in his prosecution for another year. If things went against me during that time and I was unable to pay the second note, matters between my brother and myself would be in the same condition as today, before the coming of Laura's check. While the $5,000 that I held in my hand might become lost to her, still, if I died a year from today, she would have the ample insurance funds that I had provided for her.

" 'Ha! As I expected; yellow to the core.' It was my brother's voice; he had re-entered the room. 'I thought you were ready for your journey?'

" 'I was,' I replied coldly, laying Laura's check upon his desk, 'but it has been postponed for a year.'

"His face showed no chagrin nor surprise as he touched a bell and mechanically told a clerk to bring him my first note, marked canceled, and which he handed to me in a businesslike way.

" 'You have made difficult the proving of perjury for the present,' he said. 'See to it that your are as lucky next year. You will find me within the law then, as now, and remember, I have my own ideas about skeletons.'

"He turned to his papers and I left him without a word."

Zent paused and looked at his watch. "I have told you most of my story, and must hurry home," he said.

"I take it that your interview with your brother took place this morning," observed Weston.

"It did," replied Zent, "and I have spent the succeeding hours racking my brain for plans that will at once put my business upon a paying basis. Nothing new that is plausible comes to me. I am in a rut, and the minutes are ticking against me with deathlike certainty. At times today, I have thought I must go mad; my brain and body crave action, but it must be in the right direction. I must follow plans that will force results—that are logical to me."

"Go home," said Weston, rising, and holding out his hand. "Tomorrow, at ten o'clock I will meet you at your factory. There I shall want you to give me everything in detailed information about the business that you can. I shall then work out a plan that will meet with your approval. There is undoubtedly a sure way out. Your mind needs a rest. Stop thinking of business for a day or two and you will stop worrying. If your subconsciousness refuses to part with your troubles, play bridge, read Bernard Shaw's plays, mix up nocturnally at your club if you can't sleep, but do not lie in bed awake. That has meant insanity for some men in your position. But take my word for it, your problem will not be as difficult to solve as you now think. You are in a rut, as you say."

Weston settled back in his chair when Zent had gone, and I drew up to the fire.

"Our friend's business atoms," he observed, are widely scattered. They must be put in a row, so that they can fasten themselves into a rod that can be worked with."

"Otherwise, the atoms of his own cosmos are apt to be disintegrated," I suggested gravely.

Weston smiled. "It is an unusual case," he said, "and Clement Zent is an unusual element."

"A misanthrope?" I ventured.

"An egregiously egotistic and fanatical one, I would say," said Weston.

"But do you not think him a most unnatural brother?" I asked.

"I believe he is a fanatic," replied Weston, but his pondering look told me that he was not satisfied with that conclusion. "Are you interested in the case?" he asked.

"Intensely," I replied.

"Then meet me here at nine thirty tomorrow morning," he said.

CHAPTER IV.

WESTON VISITS THE PLANT.

The Empire Shear Company's plant was located in the midst of one of those manufacturing colonies that spring up on the outskirts of large cities where land is inexpensive, within easy reach of the poorer classes who are employed in factories, and where railroads afford shipping facilities.

As Weston's big automobile swung us into a narrow street, leading to our destination, the air above our heads was thick with smoke, pierced by the white and ultimately voluminous vapors of innumerable exhausts, which, loading the smoke particles with moisture, created a heavy atmosphere.

Great trucks clattered over the brick pavement and switch-engines moved here and there in the neighboring yards, while the sonant hum of industry from the factory buildings formed the chords in a noisy symphony of creative effort.

The contrast between this and the quiet community life of Princeton inspired me. I longed to take my place in this great system of energy. The avenues were not easy ones, but set with problems and perplexities involving even the continuance of human life itself, for I was still thinking of Zent's story and the place he at present held in the busy scenes that glided past our car.

"The Empire Shear Company" appeared for a mo-

ment in the shape of a large sign on a conventional brick factory building, and the next we were ascending the steps to the office.

Weston handed his card to a boy at a telephone switch-board, who pointed the way to Alexander Zent's private office.

Order and system seemed to prevail everywhere, so far as equipment and the manners and appearance of the neatly-dressed stenographers and evidently intelligent bookkeepers and clerks were concerned.

Weston surveyed all with his quick eye and gave Zent a most cordial greeting as we passed into the latter's room, which testified to the fact that the occupant had not allowed the implements of business to crowd out the evidences of culture. It was also evident upon what Clement Zent had based his charges of extravagance in Alexander. It was clear to me that the latter had an element of romance in his temperament, perhaps too much for his own good. I had already grown to like him.

There was a rich carpet on the floor; a library table of mahogany bore a bronze book rack of massive and unique design containing a number of miscellaneous classical works; a bust of Shakespeare was on a bracket over Zent's desk; a fine bronze statuette of an artisan at work rested upon a black onyx base in a corner; some growing flowers were in a hanging basket of grotesque shape suspended near a window, and there were other articles of furniture unusual in the office of a manufacturer.

"I would prefer to take seats at the table," said Weston quickly. "Will you provide me with some blank sheets of paper?" He drew a fountain pen from his pocket, and adjusted the cap while Zent "buzzed" for writing material. We were then seated.

"What are your accounts receivable today?" Weston asked Zent.

"I will have them extended and footed up from the customers' ledger," replied the latter.

"Do you not have a record of them from day to day?" asked Weston.

"A record is made only once a month, or whenever an emergency demands, as, for instance, today," said Zent. Weston made a note of the reply. "I will put the whole force on the matter at once," continued Zent. "They are engaged upon important routine work, but it will have to wait."

Weston repressed a smile. "Instant information should always be obtainable through daily records in your bookkeeping department, Mr. Zent, and the recording of this information should be routine work. What are your accounts payable?"

"That will have to be drawn off especially, also," replied Zent, sending an order to the bookkeeping department.

"And your bills payable and receivable?"

"Can be arrived at more quickly than the others."

"Is your record of assets, such as tools, machinery, office equipment, etc., up to date, or does it apply only to the condition of business at the first of the month?"

"Only to the first."

"Mr. Zent, you should install at once a combination cash book and journal that will give you a daily financial statement with complete information on all accounts in connection with a perpetual inventory of your raw and finished material. Are you using a check register in connection with your cashbook at the present time?"

"Yes, a most up-to-date one."

"You may discard it when you put in the new system. It will then be superfluous, as your checks will be entered daily in the new combination cash book and journal, thus forming a check register as well as a cash book entry. This applies equally to deposits. You will find that the new system will reduce the work of your office force. Now, in your order system, do you post your customers' ledger charges from your salesbook?"

"Yes."

"Do you make out your invoice, factory order, and salesbook entry all at the same time?"

"Yes, by means of carbon paper."

"Posting and a salesbook are unnecessary. We will put in a system consisting of three simultaneous copies, comprising an invoice, factory order and ledger sheet, the latter being filed as a customers' account in a loose-leaf binder. I have installed like systems elsewhere, and they are all satisfactory. We must cut down work and incidentally the salary account in your office."

At this point Jenkins, the head bookkeeper, entered with the accounts receivable record to date. "In taking off this record, Mr. Zent," he said, "I noticed that the order of the Associated Eastern Dealers has not been shipped as yet."

"Tell Benson I want to see him at once," returned Zent with some annoyance.

"Benson," said Zent, as the shipping clerk entered, "why has that order of the Associated Eastern Dealers not gone forward?"

"It's not ready yet," the latter replied.

Zent dismissed Benson and picked up a speaking tube. "Tell Kendall I want to see him," he said sharply, letting the "whistle" snap back with a click.

Kendall, a shrewd, energetic man of about forty, whom I correctly took for the factory superintendent, entered the room familiarly.

"Why are not those goods for the Associated Eastern Dealers ready for shipment? You told me two days ago that they were then ready. What has delayed them?" asked Zent.

"They are ready now," said Kendall. I noticed that Weston watched the man narrowly. Then before Zent could query further as to the delay, Kendall said urgently:

"Mr. Zent, I was just coming in to ask you to step out to the forge room with me. I want you to see one of the automatic hammers at once. I don't like the way it wears at one of the bearings, and the guarantee time will be up tomorrow. I just happened to notice the expiration date in the contract."

Zent became immediately interested and hurried to the forge room. He returned shortly without Ken-

dall and laughingly said that everything was all right with the hammer, that Kendall was over-cautious and conscientious in watching the firm's interests, but that he knew his business perfectly.

"But you didn't find out why the goods for the Associated Eastern Dealers have been delayed, did you?" asked Weston.

"No! By George!" Zent replied, reaching for the speaking tube hastily again to summon Kendall.

"Wait a moment, Mr. Zent," said Weston. "Would you mind showing me the expiration date in the guarantee clause of that contract?"

Zent obtained the contract. "Why," he said, astonished, "the guarantee on that machine expired six months ago."

"I expected as much," said Weston. "Mr. Zent, I am afraid a cunning man has passed himself off as a conscientious one. The machine bearing was merely a ruse to throw you off the scent of the delayed order."

"I wonder if Kendall needs watching?" asked Zent absently.

"Most likely he needs firing," said Weston grimly. He reached over and took a book from the bronze rack on the table, turning the pages rapidly, while Zent watched him. Weston looked at Zent, and then read aloud:

" . . . these small wares and petty points of cunning are infinite, and it were a good deed to make a list of them; for that nothing doth more hurt in a state than that cunning men pass for wise."

"Substitute the word 'business' for the word 'state' and you have a direct application of Bacon to your man Kendall. From my knowledge of types, I dare say that petty points of cunning are infinite with Kendall, only you have been too much engrossed in other matters to take note of them."

CHAPTER V.

WESTON UNFOLDS HIS PLANS.

At this point Zent was called into the outer office. Kendall came in and laid upon the table a small hand machine.

"How's this for a scissors grinder?" he said, taking a pair of dull shears from his pocket and adjusting them instantly in the machine. He then turned a small crank at the side. There was a grinding sound, and the scissors were handed to us perfectly sharp for our inspection.

Weston examined the machine carefully, Kendall explaining its workings the while. Zent re-entered the room, and Kendall said: "I have made the new adjustment and it works perfectly. I will leave the machine here on the table for you to try when you get around to it."

Zent now placed before Weston the figures concerning the state of the business, which the latter had requested, including an approximate inventory of the stock on hand in raw and finished material. Weston became deeply absorbed in them.

Finally he said: "Mr. Zent, you have not sufficient resources to carry on your business with retail dealers. If they would discount their bills in ten days you might do business with them, but they take from thirty to one hundred and twenty days, as you know to your sorrow. You have considerable money tied up in this way now, and this we must endeavor to get in at once. Please instruct the proper employe to offer a discount of ten per cent for immediate payment on all slow accounts."

"But I cannot afford that," protested Zent.

"You can afford twenty-five per cent, Mr. Zent, if it will assist you in getting your business on a paying, sound and healthy basis. You may have to offer even that to some of them if you adopt my plans."

"But before I can give an order of the kind you suggest I must first approve your plans. If we are not to market through the dealer where will we get our orders?"

"Through the jobber," replied Weston.

Zent held up both hands in holy horror. "Not for mine," he said vehemently. "I've been through the mill. Go to the jobber for an order and he will say: 'First create a demand, and we will stock your goods.' When the demand is created, he buys fearfully, only as stock is needed, and nine times out of ten he will try to sell the dealer some other brand on which he (the jobber) makes more money; he does not, as a rule, effect a single sale for you through his own effort, and is only a clearing house to which you have the privilege of paying ten, twenty, or thirty per cent, with the only advantage of getting your money in ten days. We have no resources to create a demand among dealers, which can only be done by advertising direct to the consumer, and cleverly handling the latter's inquiries in such a way as to make them bring orders from the dealer. That is what our competitor is doing and he has several hundred thousand dollars for the purpose. Of course, through the demand created by the advertising, he is enabled to cut the jobber's profit to ten per cent, and the dealer's to twenty-five."

"All of which," said Weston quietly, "is in favor of my plan of selling to the jobber only."

"But who will create the demand?" asked Zent.

"The jobber himself," replied Weston.

Zent looked at Weston with great surprise on his features as if the suggestion was out of the question, and unworthy of a man of Weston's reputation.

"It won't do," he said with dull hopelessness, as if the last straw had floated beyond his reach. "What possible incentive is there for the jobber to handle our goods?"

"This," said Weston, picking up the little machine that Kendall had left on the table, "and I propose giving one of these absolutely gratis to every hardware, drug, dry goods, notion, and general dealer that buys your goods of the jobber. These machines, with accompanying colored poster cut-outs for the dealers'

show windows will constitute your national advertising campaign."

"But I tell you," said Zent impatiently, "that we have no money with which to make such a tremendous appropriation; to do what you propose will cost a fortune."

"Ah," replied Weston, "but for every machine that is given to a dealer, you will receive an order for shears, upon which you will make your regular margin of profit, and of which the cost of this machine and the advertising window cut-out will be but a small percentage. I take it that the machines can be manufactured in large quantities for about two dollars each."

"About that," confirmed Zent.

"And furthermore," continued Weston, "on all these orders you will receive payment within ten days. The bills will be discounted because all orders will come through the jobber."

Zent was now thoroughly interested. Weston was evidently opening up a new point of view, in which there might be possibilities. The straw had eddied back to the drowning man.

"The value of the advertising plan that I have suggested," pursued Weston, "lies in the fact that not a dollar will be spent in gambling for orders, as is done in a general publicity campaign, with such media as bill boards, street cars, newspapers and magazines. Your advertising, which will consist of these little grinding machines, and the cut-outs, will be done only after the order is received. It will be for you a sure-thing game. Mr. Zent, in selling through the jobber you can allow him a twenty per cent margin, can you not?"

"Yes," replied Zent, "provided I have no large advertising appropriation to take care of. Twenty per cent is double the margin allowed the jobber by our large advertising competitor."

"And at present," asked Weston, "you are allowing your dealers to make a margin of fifty per cent, whereas the margin allowed them by your advertising competitor is twenty-five per cent; is that not true?"

"That's right," replied Zent.

"Under the plan I propose," said Weston, "you will allow twenty per cent to the jobber, and twenty-five per cent to the dealer, your competitor's allowance being ten per cent to the jobber and twenty-five per cent to the dealer. Now, as you have been allowing the dealer fifty per cent, you will effect a saving of five per cent on all goods sold. Thus, I believe that with the new arrangement of jobbers' and dealers' profits, the saving that you will effect on this item alone will pay all the advertising expenditure. At these figures you will be allowing the jobber ten per cent more than your competitor, which will of itself be an incentive for him to push your goods."

"Yes," said Zent, "but not if he has to create the demand."

"No, not if he has to create the demand by old methods, but I intend to put into his hands new methods, attractive methods, that will stamp him as enterprising, enthuse his city, and traveling salesmen, reflect credit and prestige upon his house, and be of help in the sale of his other lines."

"And I infer that you intend to do all this with this little machine as a basis," remarked Zent skeptically.

"Exactly," replied Weston confidently. "What is your best selling shear, Mr. Zent?"

"The 'Tite-Cut,'" replied Zent.

"Here is a pair of them. They have a small attachment here at the screw to take up the wear, which prevents the blades from becoming loose; we make them in a line of sizes."

"Capital!" exclaimed Weston. "We will put them out in twenty, fifty, and one hundred dollar assortments, giving a machine free with each assortment. The small dealers will order the small assortments; the large dealers, the large ones."

"What in the world," asked Zent, "will a dealer want of a machine? He seldom uses scissors himself, and, if he does, they need grinding seldom. He might take the grinder home to his wife for her use, but he'd

hardly place an order for our assortment simply to get a machine to give to her."

"I am not," replied Weston, smiling, "relying upon the husbandly gallantry of our dealers, Mr. Zent, for the success of my plan."

Weston began sketching roughly on the paper before him. "This," he said, "represents a large, colored, lithographed cut-out of a young man sharpening a pair of shears on his little grinding machine. At his left are reproduced illustrations in actual size of each shear in your line of 'Tite-Cut' shears, with the price prominently brought out below each. In connection with these there is to be an enlarged illustration of the 'Tite-Cut' take-up principle, showing how the wear at the bearing can not loosen the blades. Below these shear illustrations, in prominent letters are the words: 'Your shears ground free!! Every pair of "Tite-Cut" Shears purchased of us will be ground and perfectly sharpened for a period of two years absolutely without charge at any time that they may be dull.' This cut-out must be a very striking one, but it and the little machine will constitute your advertising with the exception of a dealers' distribution booklet on shear history and shear making that I have in mind."

"But will the dealer want to go to the trouble of grinding shears free?" asked Zent.

"Most certainly," replied Weston. "With this little machine he or one of his clerks can do it easily, quickly and satisfactorily while the customer waits, only a minute or two. Don't you see that it will bring customers into the store, which is most desirable? Besides the free grinding feature and the striking show-window cut-out will sell more shears than your competitor's big advertising campaign. I believe the jobbers will jump at these assortments when you will have begun to put them out. The idea is so practical, the little grinding machines so neat and clever and the window display cut-out will be so striking that the jobber and his salesmen will be glad to feature it. Salesmen like new and interesting things to show to dealers, and it brightens them up on their other lines.

Enthusing the jobbers' salesmen means sales to the dealer every time. With the salesman talking the assortments, the dealer will place his order for one at once."

"Yes, and each jobber has from three to a hundred or more salesmen," said Zent thoughtfully. "It's a big field." The straw was growing into a fair-sized log.

"None finer," said Weston, "and, what is more important to you, you get your money in ten days."

"I am favorably impressed as to the practicability of your plan," Mr. Weston," said Zent. "It has all the elements of success, I believe. The time in which I shall have to make good is short. I shall have to decide quickly, and there is no other feasible plan in sight." He looked inquiringly at Weston, who replied: "I know of none better."

"Then we will adopt it," said Zent decisively. "For the next year I am ready to follow to the letter your instructions, and to abide by the policy you may outline in this business."

Weston drew his repeater from his vest and noted the time. "Please call up Warren, of the Colonial Lithograph Company, and have him prepare a color sketch and model of the cut-out along the lines suggested by me. Have him come out and get the copy from you, which I know you are advertising man enough to lay out and write up according to my outline. Also have two thousand of the little grinding machines made up and order material for ten thousand more. When Warren delivers the model and sketch to you, call me up, as I wish to O. K. it with you. Also attend to the other matters I spoke to you about, especially that of getting in all outstanding accounts at once by means of special discounts.

"Keep a close rein on Kendall and pin him down on everything. Keep a lookout for a successor for him in case you find that, as I have said, he is more crafty than wise, is neglecting things and has been pulling the wool over your eyes.

"I will send an assistant to correct and install the

revised system for your office work, as suggested by me. May I see that photograph over there on your desk?"

"Certainly," replied Zent, handing it to him. "It is my sister's."

"I thought so," said Weston, becoming absorbed in a study of the face. He then studied Zent's features thoughtfully, and, handing back the picture, said: "I notice that 'Smith College' is written below her name on the photo."

"Yes, Laura attended Smith," returned Zent,

"Could you get her to collaborate with an assistant of mine in writing a booklet on shears? I want a woman's temperamental finesse along with a man's practicality in it, because the booklet will go mostly to women. It will be designed for distribution through your new assortment dealers—a handsome affair as to printing, paper-stock and cover, with excellent illustrations and artistic vignettes.

"I wish your sister and my assistant to go into archeology and history for the interesting things connected with shears—their origin, manufacture and use. I believe they began in the bronze age and that they have figured in many classic, historic and tragic incidents, as well as being one of woman's best friends in our age of autos and air-ships. Mr. Hayes, here, is the assistant whom I desire to collaborate with Miss Zent in the work."

Zent smiled at me as Weston mentioned my name. "I am sure," he said graciously, "that Mr. Hayes will do it splendidly, while Laura is quite proficient in a literary way. I know she will be delighted to be of help in our venture and its work."

"Then," said Weston, evidently pleased at the favorable reception of his idea, "Mr. Hayes will call upon you both this evening, provided it will be convenient. We have little time to lose in completing my plans."

"We will be glad to have him come tonight," said Zent. "You will be most welcome, Mr. Hayes." As he finished speaking, he drew a box of cigars from a

drawer of the table. We lighted up and Weston and I drew on our coats and gloves.

We were soon rolling along the boulevards toward the city, Weston driving the car. Finally he said: "I will soon have the atoms in a row, and under my plan they will fasten themselves together quickly, forming a rod that Zent can successfully work with in his quest for gold."

"Which," I said, "puts me in mind of what Ruskin says about gold, not so much in that it applies to gold as that it applies to you, who are communicating your knowledge to Zent for a good purpose. If I do not quote rightly, forgive me. I believe your favorite says: 'The moment we can use our possessions to any good purpose ourselves, the instinct of communicating that use to others rises side by side with our power. If you can read a book rightly, you will want others to hear it; if you can enjoy a picture rightly, you will want others to see it; learn how to manage a horse, a plow, or a ship, and you will desire to make your subordinates good horsemen, plowmen or sailors; you will never be able to see the fine instrument that you are master of abused; but once fix your mind on anything useless, and all the purest pride and folly in your heart will mix with the desire, and make you at last wholly inhuman, a mere ugly lump of stomach and suckers like a cuttle fish.'"

"There are a great many cuttle fishes in the world, Billy," said Weston, with a smile.

"Yes," I replied instantly, "and few men like you, who not only make good use of your capabilities but impart them to others."

Weston made a deprecating motion with his head, his hands being occupied, as we bowled along.

"You know how to form a rod that will help Zent ——"

"Yes," he interrupted grimly, "but the rod that helps one often falls heavily on another."

"But, I hope, always on the cuttle fish," I said.

"Sometimes on a cuttle fish," he replied with a grim smile.

CHAPTER VI.

BILLY AND LAURA COLLABORATE.

It was with pleasant anticipation that I pressed the button to the Zents' apartments that evening.

Alexander Zent was the first to meet me after the maid who took my card. He ushered me into the library, explaining happily that, as I had come to work, we might just as well get into the shop at once.

I was surprised to find Weston there. He smiled cordially as I entered, and we shook hands.

"Miss Zent will not be in for a half hour," said Zent, handing me a cigar; "so make yourself comfortable."

I sank into one of the large leather chairs, the three of us making a semi-circle at the right of the electrolier.

"You were saying, Mr. Zent, that your brother was sent to Cambridge, England, to attend school while yet a small lad," said Weston.

"Yes, my father, though in moderate circumstances at the time, being what is termed 'land poor,' wanted Clement educated in England. However, after two years the boy rebelled, and ran away from the tutor to whom my father had given him in charge. For a year we heard nothing from Clement, but, after that time, he wrote to my father, who continually importuned him to return home and at the same time supplied him with what money he needed. However, Clement did not return until his twenty-fifth year.

"After his return, his rebellious and headstrong temperament asserted itself continually in clashes with my father. However, the latter considered himself to blame for sending a mere boy so far away from home to school among a strange people, and he believed that this had much to do with the stunting of Clement's affections."

"Mr. Zent," asked Weston, "have you preserved the letters written by your brother just after reaching Cambridge, and those written after his truancy?"

"Yes," replied Zent, "I have them. My brother wrote to me as well as to my father."

"I would like very much to see one of each," said Weston. "I am a student of hand-writing and wish to see what change, if any, took place in your brother's hand with the change in his disposition, for you have told me, Mr. Zent, that he was most lovable and kind before being sent to England, and that for some months after reaching there his letters abounded in filial regard and brotherly affection. If you will let me take these two letters, I shall return them within a few days."

"I shall be glad to let you take them," replied Zent, "I have at times been interested in graphology myself. I shall be glad to know your observations."

Zent brought a packet of letters from a drawer of the library table and selected two letters therefrom which he handed to Weston, who examined the dates carefully.

"These will do," he said, "putting them into his pocket.

"Do you recall, Mr. Zent," he asked, "any physical mark peculiar to your brother as a boy?"

"None, except upon the left foot, he had a double toe."

"Do you mean that two toes were grown together?"

"Yes, one broad nail covered them both."

"I have seen like malformations," said Weston. "Ah, here is Miss Zent!"

"Laura," said Zent, smiling and grasping my arm as I rose, "this is your collaborator, Mr. Hayes."

We were soon interested in the proposed booklet, Weston outlining to Laura the treatment of the subject that he expected her to give it. I thought her very beautiful, with the most delicate and flower-like features that I had ever seen, as she sat there in the library listening to Weston. Her gown was a simple white one, which she wore with lithe and charming grace.

"In the classics," Weston was saying earnestly, "the shear has probably most importance in the hands of Atropos, the eldest of the Fates, who cuts the thread of life, after Clotho has spun and Lachesis measured it."

I looked at Zent, who sat with his hand shading his eyes, and I thought of how near Atropos had come to cutting the thread of his troubled life but a few short hours before; and then I looked at Weston, the man who was using his fine intellect in an endeavor to cause Lachesis to lengthen the span beyond the short year prescribed for Zent, if he failed to pay his brother's note within that time.

But best of all it was to look upon this fair young girl, who knew so little of how she had laid a restraining hand upon Atropos' arm as she called her brother Aleck's name and slipped, with loving hands, the banker's letter and the check under the door that stood between her and a life sorrow.

It was one of the little dramas of business that are always happening, and of this one, I hoped the world would never hear.

Here were the actors: Hero, Heroine, and Victim, while, with a shift of scene, alone and unloved, in his suburban home, I pictured the Villian, a parchment man with ink for blood, the blood of a cuttle fish, calculating the days, hours and minutes that would bring him his pound of flesh.

And then the evening wore on with Weston gone and Zent dozing in his chair, while Laura and I delved into the ancient past, through heavy tomes, seeking the lore of shears.

Once, as we bent over a book, a tiny wisp of her hair touched my forehead; again, our fingers met as we compared notes; and, anon, we talked of our college days with reminiscent laughs and chatter.

I spent many of these evenings at the Zent's, and it was with a feeling of regret that I saw the booklet completed, and knew that my part of the work was at an end.

CHAPTER VII.

CONCERNING A DOUBLE TOE.

Six months passed rapidly by. Under Zent's careful and energetic management of Weston's policies and under his counselorship, the Empire Shear Company forged ahead rapidly along the new lines.

Three general salesmen, carefully selected for their experience, ability and acquaintanceship among the jobbing trade, had covered the country calling exclusively upon jobbers. The latter, generally, had taken on the new assortments, their first orders including outfits for their salesmen to carry that were made up of a dealer's grinding machine, a cut-out show-window display, a few booklets, and a sample line of the shears comprised in the assortments.

The dealers had literally jumped at the assortments, and, as Weston's plan of advertising and free grinding proved sulphitically popular, most of them sold out quickly, placing duplicate orders with the jobbers who, in turn, placed duplicate orders with the Empire Shear Company.

The latter issued a book on salesmanship designed to interest, instruct and enthuse the jobbers' salesmen on the assortments and upon the Empire Shear Company's line generally.

When one of the general salesmen of the Empire Shear Company called upon a jobber, the latter upon taking on the line would either furnish him with a list of the house's salesmen, or direct that so many letters of so much printed matter be sent it from time to time for distribution to its salesmen.

A jobbers' salesmen mailing-list was a feature of the campaign, and once a month the company mailed out a letter, circular or booklet, containing new selling points and ginger for the constantly increasing army of jobbers' salesmen handling the line.

Kendall was still retained as superintendent, Zent having shown him the error of his ways, through Weston's insight, for after all he was a most skillful craftsman and manager.

New factory and cost systems had been installed and the office methods revised and shortened materially. System was now the keynote of the enterprise and had its perfect place in every department of the business.

Weston's policy had made good, and the next six months would see Zent walk into his brother's office

and pay off the second note without its making a larger dent in his resources than a pea dropped upon a snare drum.

Thus stood matters when, one afternoon in May, Weston and I sat chatting in the latter's office. The windows were up and from the bottom of the canon below us the distant roar of street traffic was wafted on the spring air.

Of late Weston had been much interested in foreign correspondence, and I had noticed that he gave especial attention to letters addressed to and received from the city of Cambridge, England.

One day, while he was out, a telephone message was given me from a prominent bath-house. "Tell Weston Clement Zent has just come in," said a voice, and a click in my receiver told me that the speaker had "hung up."

Just then Weston came in, and I repeated the message.

"I've been waiting for that for a month," he said, in his quick, quiet way, and the next moment the elevator had swallowed him.

An hour later he returned, and there was a look of triumph on his firm mouth as he said: "It took me two days to find out by grammapheny what I have just confirmed in two minutes by—yes, why, not?—'pedology'."

Today we had talked of many things, for he was versed in certain branches of all—religion, law, science, art, literature, history, psychology, criminology, etc., and I had found him to be neither a dilettante nor a sciolist.

He would talk only on the branches that he knew about positively, and when we broke ground in any with which he was unfamiliar, which was seldom, he could listen, if one had aught to tell him, as well as he could talk on a subject which he knew.

Decisive and masterful in action, quick in thought and resource, and with abundant knowledge and training, it was not to be wondered at that he was a promi-

nent factor in the business life of the day, a counselor of millionaires and of officers of great corporations.

The one subject upon which he never conversed was himself; perhaps through modesty, and perhaps through policy; but it is a good trait which motive cannot sully.

We were at peace with the world that afternoon, alternately smoking and conversing, sometimes with Weston thinking, and me dreaming with just a wisp of soft hair brushing my forehead, and delicate fingers meeting mine in contact over old books.

At that moment all the trouble in the world, condensed into five feet seven of young womanhood, burst in upon us. It was Laura Zent, and there was dull horror in her dark eyes, while her mouth was drawn with anxiety.

"Come with me quick," she gasped. "Aleck has gone to kill Clement Zent."

We were on our feet instantly rushing for the elevators; we were on the street, hailing a cab; we were galloping over rough pavements, and through it all Laura was telling us that Clement had taken some legal action that would throw the Empire Shear Company into a receiver's hands ruining Alexander completely.

"I was at Alecks' office when his attorney 'phoned the news. I caught the gist from what Aleck said—then he swore terribly, and smashed the receiver through the telephone casing. '—— —— him! I'll kill him!' is what he said, and he snatched a revolver from his desk, and is probably at Clement's now. Oh, oh!" She put her hands over her face to shut out what her eyes were picturing, while I tried to comfort her, my hand upon her shoulder and my lips close to her shell-like ear, for the noise and rattle were deafening.

Weston fairly wrenched the door from the cab as he sprang from it before the galloping horse had stopped in front of the building containing Clement Zent's offices.

Laura and I followed but missed the car he took.

In our own car, ascending with us, was Clement Zent, too preoccupied with his own thoughts to see us in the crowded elevator.

"See," I said, "there is Clement Zent, and Weston is with your brother Aleck by this time. It's all right."

A wave of crimson came into Laura's white cheeks, and for the first time I noticed that her hand was in mine. As I relaxed my hold, she quietly withdrew it, and we followed Clement into his office, where he encountered Weston standing over his brother. Weston had just slipped a polished object into his own pocket, while four red marks, as of powerful finger-ends, burned on Aleck Zent's right wrist.

"I am representing Aleck," Weston said to Clement Zent mechanically, with quiet power, "and you will talk to me. I do not know what action you have taken today, but if it is taken in the name of Clement Zent it is revokable. Come here, Billy."

He whispered in my ear, and I moved quietly to a place a few paces behind Clement Zent.

"You are, no doubt, a very clever man," the latter said to Weston, smiling sarcastically, "but I think the Zents would prefer to settle their private affairs among themselves."

"It is probably just as well for you that you have not been allowed to," returned Weston in quick and evenly sustained tones. "It is probably also just as well that you have forced my hand, although I had planned to show it to you without a scene. If the action you have taken today is as a stockholder in the Empire Shear Company, I can understand your philanthropy in investing five hundred dollars in the capital stock of a company in which you had no faith."

"There is usually method in my madness," replied Zent with sarcasm, looking insultingly at his brother and then at Weston. "But how all this concerns you is beyond me."

"There are many things beyond you, sir," replied Weston coldly, "even the sea, and beyond that, the dead body of the boy that was Clement Zent."

A cynical smile only deepened on Zent's face. Laura and her brother caught their breaths and stared at Weston.

"A pretty tale, no doubt," said Zent, with sneering tolerance. "Well, let's hear it." He sat down upon a convenient chair, and eyed Weston.

"I believe," said the latter quickly, "that you are John Winn, a son of James Winn, the tutor with whom Clement Zent, Sr., intrusted his son in Cambridge; that Clement Zent, Jr., died in your father's house, while you went to the continent; that after a year you began writing to Clement Zent, Sr., as his son, your father having represented to him that his son had run away. It is all a question of grammapheny—and the proof is here."

Here Weston produced the two letters that Aleck Zent had given him.

"The first of these," he continued, "was written by Clement Zent, Jr.; the last, by yourself, for even there you were a clever penman, were you not, Mr. Winn? The object of your father in foisting you upon Clement Zent, Sr., as his son, was to provide a competence for you, your father being a poor man, and Clement Zent, Sr., a man of property. Your misguided father has no doubt profited but little by your prosperity, however."

"Are you through with that clack?" asked Clement Zent; and then, with what seemed actual good nature, he said: "Why, even if your preposterous story were true, you could only offer expert testimony in handwriting, while I would offset that by the testimony of the experts that I would bring in to swear that the same person wrote both letters. I am afraid," he said, laughing at Weston, "that you will have to guess again."

"Cambridge records and witnesses," said Weston cooly, "no doubt, later on, will prove my story to the satisfaction of a court and jury. But we cannot wait for that now; consequently, we shall try a little experiment in pedology. Clement Zent, Jr., was known by his brother to have had a double toe covered by

one nail on his left foot, and there are other living witnesses to that fact. Will you kindly remove your left shoe and stocking?"

"Well, hardly," replied Zent. "Now, my dear sir," he said, rising, "I think this has gone about far enough. Will you leave my office, or shall I have to call the police?"

"You may call the police," replied Weston, nodding to me, "after I have proved to Aleck Zent that you are an impostor, powerless to harm him, and that you can be convicted of forgery and perjury."

Instantly, I had pinioned the man's arms behind him, while Zent and Weston held his lower limbs and removed the shoe and stocking of his left foot. The five toes were separately and perfectly formed. Weston moved over to the telephone as Zent let Winn's left limb fall to the floor.

"What does my experiment tell you, Mr. Zent?" asked Weston, looking at the latter, while the thin frame of John Winn shuddered in my grasp.

A composite look of amazement, sorrow and relief was upon Aleck Zent's face as he went over where Laura stood and took her in his arms.

"That you may call the police," he said.

THE PROMOTER; HIS GENIUS

A Rough-Edged Satire.

BY ELWOOD S. BROWN.

GENIUS is a strange, intangible force. It is an undefinable, peculiar something that possesses a certain class of extraordinary human beings and gives vent to itself in a manner that impresses and confounds mortals.

The outlet of genius may be in a beautiful piece of poetry or it may be in the rare ability to breed Poland-China hogs from mongrel stock; genius may become apparent in a brilliant oratorical outburst, or it may manifest itself in the ability to raise watermelons that live up, or better, grow up to the pictures in the catalog; genius may reveal itself in rare works of imaginative art, or it may give demonstration of its presence in the science of making one dollar look like two to the other man. The latter is the most weird, yet attractive form in which the business world recognizes genius. The rarest genius with whom I ever came in personal contact was a gentleman who sold me a $5 pair of shoes for $1.69, and made me believe. They lasted until the next rain. It was the 29th day of March, in Chicago.

The first-class promoter is a genius of the highest type. Often at alternating times, he is a creative and destructive genius. All promoters do not work destruction, though it is a delightful exception to a well-established rule. By brilliant mental magnetism the promoter creates wealth from a substance that never existed. He rears, raises, feeds and exercises it on paper and imagination, until a relapse comes, when it is caused to evaporate through the waste basket.

I once knew of a promoter who had a dream of a gold mine. When he awoke he started in to work. He ordered $50 worth of stock books (brilliantly

printed), spent $3,000 in advertising, and sold at 10 cents per share. When in his prospectus he had expanded his beautiful second nature creation until it had the semblance of a magnificent reality, he advanced to 15 cents, sold off some $50,000 worth, and embarked for the Fiji Islands.

Before making an analysis of the promoter, let us take a brief glance at the advertising literature which he casts about so promiscuously. Of course this it not the method of all promoters. The prospective purchaser is urged to "get in on the ground floor." This is a beautiful nature picture, for rarely is there a second story to obstruct the view. In an endless vista the ground floor stretches as far as the eye can see, and beautiful decorations of the dollar sign, period and figure "10" meet the gaze of the investor. Once in a while on this ground floor of 10-cent stock a flimsy scantling is raised when the price goes to 15, and I have heard of instances where the plastering stage was reached when 10-cent stock swelled to the 50-cent mark. All temporary construction work usually is done, however, to increase the possibilities of the "ground floor."

"Genius of Pumpkin"

Occasionally, for variety's sake, we come in contact with a 15 per cent dividend paying proposition with stock at $100 per share. This is an interesting mental extravagance. The 15 per cent looms up in brilliant gilt and suggests an affluence of income on a mere bagatelle of investment. The eager, prospective buyer sees the quarterly dividends regularly coming in, while he sits by and smokes a perfecto in blissful, careless ease. Visions of sunny days, the novel, a hammock, a banana and a dose flit before his mental inwardness—and he stakes a few thousands. The first quarterly payment arrives on time; though the second quarterly is slightly delayed the investor's smile

"The Promoter in a Hardware Store"

is as benign as ever; after much worrying the third comes in. The next notice is an assessment; and the next. Finally he sells for 39 cents, buys a hoe and some cucumber seeds with the proceeds and gets to work. Then some musings, gentle contemplations and hard-headed philosophy. He murmurs, "Oh! how attractively that ad. was worded. What brilliantly scintillating testimonials, surrounded by printers' starry devices, gleamed from the beautiful page of the paper; what a portrayal of comfort and ease was the pictured gentleman opening his mail and receiving the quarterly dividend; how smoothly and glossily appeared those gentle sentences relative to an old, established plant that had been making money for years and continually earning 25 per cent on the investment; so few shares were for sale, and only a limited number at a time; so glowingly picturesque was the thought of your money being immediately put to work for the purpose of earning you a fine return; above all, how attractive the phrase, 'There is no water, but every cent is backed by tangible assets.'" Is it not wonderful?

The mining and oil stock propositions, through advertising, are two of the most seductively entrancing money-making schemes with which the innocent "biter" comes in contact. Always it is, "The grand chance of the lifetime; we are bound to strike in 30 days, as surely as the sun rises; the stock then will jump to the dollar mark." Similar maltreatments of the virtues are inflicted. The 10, 15 and 20 cent stocks, of this genus, appear to be inflated with a quickly rising tendency. For some unaccountable reason, however, although filled with very light gas, the ascent fails to

"The baby clutched his full share"

take place; usually the ropes are not cut. If the true nature of the stock were allowed free vent, there is no doubt but that it would soar and soar until the earth appeared in a dim halo of misty profits. If but properly allowed to follow the bent of its nature, a 10-cent stock, at the very lowest estimate, would develop into a $10 one. Rightly cultured, fed, educated and gentlemanly treated, it would grow to a $20 giant. But for some unaccountable reason the poor little infant, so full of future prospects, so budding in the possibilities of bursting, luscious fruit, so wonderfully endowed with native ability, integrity, honor, virtue and strength, is slaughtered in its mere babyhood. One little innocent stock, guilty of nothing but having been born, was suffocated and choked to death when but 12 days old. Why? I do not know. Ask the investor. Do not bother the promoter, for he will tell you that not only was he working for the advancement of the community with all the powers in his possession, but that he was, furthermore, living entirely on good will. There is always a reason.

First and foremost of the most prominent characteristics of the promoter is what is popularly termed "personal magnetism." The high-water mark promoter can attract knives, rusty nails and all manner of iron and steel. I once watched a promoter in a hardware store. A box of bolts, as he passed by, wiggled in ecstasy; a hinge and door-knob fairly leaped for joy as he neared their neighborhood, and a barrel of nails jumped from their abode and in droves clambered into his lap. A mere man stands but little chance of resisting him.

In conjunction with high personal magnetism, the promoter of standing possesses a powerful mentality. He represents the highest development of practical, organizing business brains. The ability to plan, and

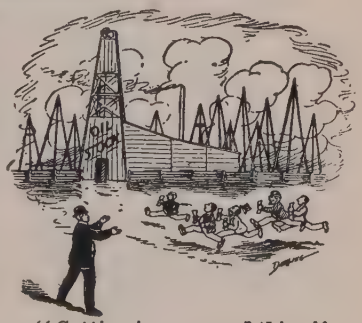
plan far and deep, accurately and forcibly, consistently and workably is his strong, natural endowment. His game is one of absorbing interest. Men are but puppets to be pulled and manipulated by will strings. The more men involved and the more difficult and complex the situation, the more does the promoter enjoy himself. Love of power, control and mastery sound the keynotes of his heart.

Keen perception, perfect memory and shrewd foresight stand out prominently in the promoter's mental composition. And there is always a lawyer around. Sometimes two, occasionally a dozen, possibly a herd. A promoter rarely acts without his attendant, but through him works with tremendous vigor. "I refer you to my attorney," or, "Drop in and consult with my lawyer," are his favorite expressions to large numbers of his business associates.

Executive ability is a strong characteristic. The execution certainly is marvelous and varied. No financier of ordinary standing can long live in his presence. A good-sized bank account, under his tremendous power will die in a very few days. Nothing in his line for any length of time resists him. He controls men with machine-like accuracy. He leads and urges the brainiest men forward as far as they are capable of going without conflicting with his ruling. He is a natural born controller.

The promoter's head bulges with bumps of self-esteem, self-reliance and courage. He knows that he is the biggest man in the deal and he makes every man belonging to the organization know it also.

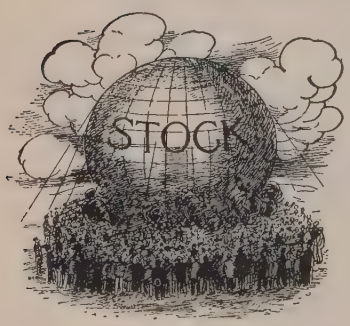
The great, absorbing pleasure of the promoter lies in the work of organizing. Once a promoter was temporarily retired, for the other man was a little in advance of him. He was not daunted. Borrowing $50 he organized a family company, making himself president, one son secretary and the baby an hon-



"Getting in on a good thing"

orary stockholder. Again he borrowed a small sum, placed another company on paper, well capitalized in name, and issued a majority stock into the family company. The baby clutched its full share. For a third time he borrowed; this time for $1,000, and secured a brief option on a tract of land by using the paper influence of his second company. Advertising judiciously, he sold some land and made a respectable payment for a continuance of the option. On the backing he had secured he organized a larger company than before, presented the controlling stock to the smaller company, and advertised the new company in a large way. The land sold like wild-fire. A number of influential men, as time went on, entered the large company and the deed was done. The family company ruled, and every time the baby squealed he shook the large consolidation to the bottom, as the dissent, represented by honorary voice in the smallest concern, by stock waves passed to the outer rim. The promoter, when desiring a little diversion, organized auxiliary companies, branch companies, side-show companies, general utility companies, companies in the abstract, concrete and compound, and one company to go around and pick up any little leavings that might be lying around loose awaiting organized effort. He even went to the point of starting a nursery company to give the baby executive training. The infant objected on the ground, that, holding an important interest in the largest concern, it should not be relegated to so unimportant a position.

It is a rare treat to witness a certain class of promoter operating on a prospective patient. The patient enters the office and is met by a smiling face; a genially smiling face; a benignly smiling face; a smiling face in which good will, good nature and kindly interest are wonderfully blended; a smiling face expressive of keen sympathy and an intense



"Some one ought to cut the ropes"

desire to do everyone good. The patient seats himself. The weather, the city, business conditions and topics of general current interest are discussed. The patient does most of the talking, his companion giving an occasional nod, asking a question or two, and maintaining a strong interest in the subjects. The visitor, especially if he admires his own conversational powers, enjoys the impression he makes. The promoter is gently feeling him. If he be "soft and easy," this preliminary to the main consideration lasts but a short time. With a subtle influence the master gradually arouses his companion's enthusiasm. The latter's attention becomes keener and his tone more and more animated. Then the promoter gives a few of his opinions on various matters in a sharp, energetic, convincing tone,—views that he knows will be in perfect accord with his patient's. The next step indirectly proceeds to business. The operator makes a few statements in a confidential, confiding way, especially inviting his companion to make a careful investigation of the proposed enterprise. He even urges this point, full well knowing what effect the influence of trusting his word will produce. Then in a quick, energetic, business-like tone he starts in with a graphic outline of the advantages of his scheme. He commences at the beginning, giving a short synopsis of the history to date. Figures are used, carefully, concisely and with an appearance of accuracy. As slowly but surely he increases the flow of his magnetic power his voice becomes stronger, more emphatic; his gestures increase in number; his eyes acquire a sharper, keener, more intense look; his mind appears to be working at race-horse pace. The patient sits enthralled, slowly but surely falling into his toils. The hypnotic influence grows stronger and stronger, by degrees rising to a maximum. The talker at the zenith of his power, strains every force of his nature till his whole being is a mass of vitalized energy.

The patient submits to the operation, pays his check for a goodly number of shares, and departs.

The promoter smiles complacently and goes for a $1.50 dinner. He is worth it.

No, the promoter is not a detriment to society. Despite all the damage and wreckage for which he is responsible, a vast deal of good is accomplished. He gives energy, enterprise and life to his surroundings. He starts the people, the money and the very blood to circulating. His guiding principle is action; quick, vigorous, powerful; action that works for large results. May he live long, grow fat, increase in brain power, give birth to a conscience and die a righteous man.

BROTHERS.

BY S. ROLAND HALL.

"COLLINS," said the editor, "we ought to get a statement of some kind from Ralph Pierson."

The reporter looked up.

"He has refused positively to say anything; I can try again if you like, but I'm afraid there is not much chance of getting him to talk."

It was an important affair from a news point of view, and Collins, with instructions from his chief, started for the jail.

For months there had been trouble at the college. First, it was a division among the students on account of the newly-elected president. Then there had been some exasperating cases of hazing. The climax came with a series of thefts. Time after time the mail box of the college was opened and letters containing considerable sums of money stolen. Detectives were finally put to work.

The merchants with whom the students dealt were put on watch for marked money. On the day after a decoy letter was mailed to the college building and stolen, a dealer telephoned the detectives that he had received one of the marked bills.

It was not difficult to identify the student, and young Pierson was arrested.

He seemed greatly agitated when confronted with the evidence against him, but refused to explain how the money came in his possession.

He was a bright student, of good family, and had an excellent record. He was held in high esteem by the faculty and by the entire college.

The affair was the talk of the town. Many of the students did not believe Pierson guilty of the theft and declared he was merely shielding some one else.

Pierson was taken to the president, who talked with him for an hour. But the boy refused to make any

explanation. He would say nothing except that he was innocent of wrong.

The president shared the belief of many of the students that Pierson was not guilty of the theft. He was loath to have him tried, but there was no alternative. It was but justice to the college that the guilty person be convicted. Pierson acknowledged that he had given the dealer the marked note and surrendered without question another found on him.

The day the student was committed to jail for trial the president addressed the college, pleading if there was anyone whom Pierson was shielding, or anyone who knew more about the thefts, that he come out and save the reputation of the young man.

It was the day after the president's appeal that Collins was sent by his editor to get a statement.

Collins walked into the jailer's office and asked permission to interview the student.

"I can not let you," the jailer said; "he doesn't want to talk with anybody."

"Well, just let me speak to him," suggested the reporter.

The jailer refused.

"Where have you got him?" asked Collins casually.

"In the first cell of the second floor," said the jailer.

Collins chatted a while and went on to the college grounds. As he passed the jail his eye took in the wall and the windows of the second floor. He had his orders to interview the student and he purposed doing so if possible.

The college did not yield much that was news. The president sent word that he knew nothing more to say. The affair was the talk of all the students, but most of the details had already been published.

Collins, however, struck something new. He learned that Pierson was in love with the sister of Randolph Wagner, a classmate who lived in the town. That suggested an idea, and he immediately sought Wagner. But he was not to be found. He lived in the

East End and Collins resolved to go there after he had carried out his plan for seeing Pierson.

It was almost dark when he started back to the jail. The building stood next to the river and was flanked by a hill and several unimproved lots. Collins sat on the river bank and waited until the lights of the town had been burning an hour. Then he walked cautiously to the rear of the jail.

By resting a plank against the wall, he got his hands on top and easily raised himself. When he stood on the wall his face was almost on a level with the window of the student's cell.

Collins whistled, but there was no sound from within. He called softly with no better results. Then he noticed something dangling from the window. His curiosity was aroused and, after satisfying himself that he could get back, he dropped down inside the jail yard and found a rope, made of a blanket, suspended from the window.

The mystery deepened, but Collins was determined to solve it, and he drew himself up by the rope until he could look into the cell. The window framework of iron had been wrenched loose at the side and bent around until there was room enough for the body of a man. As soon as his eyes became accustomed to the darkness, Collins saw that the cell was unoccupied. Pierson had broken jail!

The reporter whistled softly to himself and slid hastily down the rope. Then he climbed over the wall and ran across the lot like another escaped prisoner.

Twenty minutes later he was in the East End near the home of Pierson's sweetheart. He concealed himself at the back of the house where he could watch the doors and windows.

He remained there some time and had almost concluded his theory was wrong, when a door opened and he saw a girl step out and go across to the opposite side of the yard. A moment later she and the fugitive student walked slowly toward the reporter and stood together a few yards away.

For some minutes the girl said nothing. She was resting her head on his shoulder and sobbing. Pierson broke the silence.

"Be brave, sweetheart," he said; "don't you believe in me?"

"But it is so dreadful," she sobbed, "and everybody in town is talking about you."

"You believe me when I say I am innocent, don't you?"

"You know I do, but why won't you explain it all?"

"Because, my dear, I would be breaking my promise to another."

Collins leaned forward and strained his ears.

The student went on. "I would disgrace someone else—disgrace him and all his people. If he owns up, it is all right, but I cannot break my word."

The girl raised her head and spoke indignantly. "The coward! Tell me who it is and I will go to him and make him confess."

"I can not tell you," he replied firmly, "I can not tell anyone. I have given my word and I will not break it."

Collins did not feel he had a right to listen longer. He crept away quietly and watched from a distance until he saw the girl return to the house. Then he kept in sight of Pierson long enough to be sure he was returning to the jail.

Of course, it was plain enough, thought Collins. This girl's brother was at the bottom of the whole business. He did not believe Pierson would shield anyone else when it would mean his own ruin, but he was in love with the girl and wanted to spare her family the disgrace. Wagner had probably passed the decoy bills to Pierson in payment of a loan. "Whew," said the reporter under his breath, "what a story!"

When he reached the jail again and lifted himself on the wall, the rope was no longer there.

Pierson came to the window when he heard the whistle. "Who is it?" he asked, after a moment's hesitation.

"It's Collins; of the News, you know," said the reporter, speaking cautiously. "I want to talk with you about this affair of yours."

"I cannot say anything about it," replied the student.

"But you'll say something, won't you?" returned the reporter, encouragingly. "Lots of people believe you are not guilty of this thing, and it looks like bad business to ruin your reputation if you can clear the affair up."

"I cannot do it," said the boy, wearily; "I wish I could."

"Look here, Pierson," said the reporter, "there's no use of beating around the bush. I know where you have been tonight, and I have the whole thing sifted down. Young Wagner is the fellow who got the money and you are simply keeping quiet for the sake of the girl and her people."

There was no reply.

"Come, now," said Collins, "isn't what I've said a fact? I was here about eight o'clock and you were gone and I followed you."

There was still no reply and Collins felt somewhat uncomfortable.

"Of course, it is my business to get at the bottom of this thing," he added, apologetically, "but I don't want to let out your secret. Now, if you will just tell me that you are shielding some other fellow who passed the bills on you, you need not give his name. I will go ahead, but I won't write what has happened tonight. People can form their own opinions as to who the fellow is. Will you do that?"

"No, I will not," said the boy, more firmly than ever. "And I want to ask you one thing. If you were in my place and I were in yours, would you like for me to do what you are going to do?"

Collins hesitated. "Well, I don't know," he said, evasively; "but that isn't the point. I have been sent to get at the truth and I owe a duty to my paper. It isn't what I want to do. I sympathize with you and I respect your motives, but I think you are foolish to

stay in this trouble when a few words might get you out."

"That will be all right," said the boy. "They will find out in a few days that I wasn't even there the night the money was taken." He suddenly broke off, and spoke again with feeling: "Did you ever love a girl?"

"Yes," said Collins, "I think I have."

"Well, if you have followed me tonight, I want you to think what a girl is to a fellow before you do anything."

That ended the interview.

Collins dropped back over the wall and started for the News office.

A few lights were still gleaming from homes along the avenue. As he passed one large house in a yard back from the street, he could hear a girl singing. It was a love song, and her voice was fresh and sweet. The soft, mellow notes of the piano and the dreamy song carried the man back. He remembered the time when in his boyish love he would have died to save Her good name. He listened until the girl ceased.

* * * * * *

The editor looked up as Collins entered. "Well," he said, with an inquiring look.

"It's no use," replied the reporter, shaking his head. "I did my best, but he won't talk. I guess he is a fool, but somehow I admire his grit."

CELESTINE AND CORALIE.

BY MONTAGUE GLASS.

Abe Potash, senior member of Potash & Perlmutter, sat in the private office at the rear of the firm's commodious salesroom, and indulged in a frugal lunch of zwieback and coffee, which his office boy had procured for him at an adjacent bakery. He first soaked the toast-like cakes in the coffee, and then absorbed them by what might be termed a process of inhalation. Thus employed, he failed to notice the entrance of Louis Mintz, a manufacturer's drummer.

"H'lo, Abe," Louis cried, "what are you doing? Eating your lunch?"

"A question!" Abe snorted. He plied a paper napkin vigorously, to remove the traces of soaked zwieback. "What did you think I was doing?"

"Well," said Louis, "it looked like a face massage at first."

Potash frowned.

"Louis, please," he protested, "do me the favor. I ain't in no humor for jokes."

Louis patted him on the shoulder. "What's the grouch now, Abe?" he asked.

"No grouch at all, Louis," Abe replied. "Just the contrary. I'm feeling good. Look in the store, Louis." He pointed through the door toward the salesroom. It was empty save for three or four of his employes, who were listlessly arranging the racks of cloaks. "See the customers, Louis, falling over each other. Ain't it?"

"You've got no kick coming," Louis retorted; "your expenses ain't high."

"No, Louis, there I give you right. My expenses ain't high," he admitted. "I guess zwieback and coffee don't cost no five dollars, Louis." He paused for one reflective moment. "But Perlmutter," he continued in tones of bitter profundity, "he eats zwie-

back, too, Louis. Believe me, Louis, if zwieback were a dollar a piece then he eats 'em. But zwieback at a cent a piece, Louis, is poison for Perlmutter. He dassent touch 'em."

"No?" Louis ejaculated.

"No, siree, Louis," Abe said emphatically. "Comes twelve,—one o'clock, Mawruss Perlmutter gets anxious. He got to go to lunch. But mind you, Louis, he dassent go alone. That's poisonous, too, Louis. He waits for a customer to come in, and takes him along, Louis. Then," Abe concluded mournfully, "he gives a memorandum to the book-keeper and right away ten dollars goes into the expense account."

"Oh, come now," Louis protested, "Morris Perlmutter's a good fellow."

"Sure, he's a good fellow," Abe agreed, "with my money, Louis."

He drained the cold sip of coffee, and cleared his throat with a great rasping noise.

"How long you done business with us, Louis?" he asked.

"About three years," Louis replied, "as long as you've been partners."

"Then you don't know Mawruss when he was in partnership with Sol Finkelbein, in the millinery business?"

"No," Louis replied, "that's out of my line."

"Well, they wasn't together long," Abe went on. "Quick work, Louis. Six months was enough for Finkelbein. You don't mean to tell me you ain't heard how it happened?"

"Go ahead, Abe," said Louis, "and get it off your mind."

"Well, it was like this. About five years ago Sol Finkelbein comes to Mawruss and says he got five thousand dollars, and makes a suggestion that they should go as partners together in the millinery business. Mawruss says I'll think it over. He needs to think it over bad, Louis, especially as he only has two thousand himself, Louis. So he excuses himself, and

goes round the corner, and comes right back, and says all right, he's concluded to accept the offer.

"Now, Mawruss don't get them tony ideas of his yesterday, Louis. He's had 'em for years already; so when it comes down to arranging the details with Finkelbein, Mawruss gets busy right away.

" 'We want to do a high class retail business. Ain't it?' he tells Finkelbein.

" 'Sure,' says Finkelbein.

" 'Then here's the way to go about it,' Mawruss explains, and he fixes up a scheme like this: They're to hire a store on Thirty-third street, and Finkelbein he says all right. The rent ain't much, Louis, only five hundred a month,—that ain't much for Mawruss,—and so they're ready to fix up about the firm name.

" 'Finkelbein and Perlmutter,' Finkelbein suggests, but Mawruss don't like that at all.

" 'Well,' says Finkelbein, 'make it Perlmutter and Finkelbein.'

" 'No good,' Mawruss tells him. It don't take Sol Finkelbein long to propose the Royal Millinery Company, the Paris Millinery Store, and such like names, and when he's all through, Mawruss goes on shaking his head for a minute or so longer, and then starts in:

" 'No, Sol,' he says, 'you're wrong. I've thought this matter over a whole lot, and there aint' nothing to it but this.'

"He takes a sheet of paper, and draws a square on it, like the front of a plate glass window, and right across it, diagonally from left to right, he puts *Celestine and Coralie.* Then in the upper left hand corner *Hats,* and away, way down in the lower right hand corner, *21 Rue d'Hauteville, Paris.*

"Finkelbein takes one look, and breathes hard through his nose. He sees it's the real thing, Louis, and he's tickled to death. Well, he don't say nothing for some moments, and then he gets an idea.

" 'See here, Mawruss,' he asks, 'am I Celestine or Coralie?'

" 'A question!' Mawruss says. 'Don't you worry

yourself about such trifles. You ain't Coralie, and I ain't Celestine, but you and me, or me and you, are Celestine and Coralie.'

"So Sol and Mawruss they go to work and buy goods, and open up a swell place, and they do a nice business, Louis. They got a couple of good saleswomen, who call the customers 'Mad-damn,' and they done an elegant spring trade. They got to do it, Louis, because Finkelbein's a married man, and needs to make a good living to support his wife.

"You know Sol Finkelbein's wife, Louis? No? Well, that's old Israel Plonsky's daughter, and you bet, Louis, she ain't got a nicer temper than the old man. Believe me, Louis, my Rosie is a good talker when she gets going, but Beckie Plonsky, that's a good talker, y'understand. I hear from Mawruss that all the time him and Finkelbein was in business, she's kicking good about the firm name.

" 'Ain't you two crazy?' she says, 'two grown men, to be making monkeys of yourselves with such names as Coralie and Celestine. Ain't Finkelbein and Perlmutter good enough?'

"But Sol Finkelbein don't say nothing. He knows they done a nice business with them names of Celestine and Coralie, and that Paris address makes a big hit with the women. Another thing, Louis, every young fellow that passes that store, looks at the names Celestine and Coralie, and shoots out his cuffs. Then he walks back again and rubbers in, Louis, but he don't see nothing, of course, for them heavy dutchess lace curtains that Mawruss hangs in the door and window, hide the view.

"Well, Louis, them names was certainly one big ad, and Mawruss he uses 'em on his letter heads, bill heads and cards. Why, he even has the book-keeper sign his business letters that way. That's the same book-keeper we got now, Louis, Miss Cohen. D'ye know her?

"Well, one day he tells the book-keeper to write to Jake Cosmin, drummer for Magnus and Schiff, and ask him why he don't drop in to show his samples.

So, Miss Cohen—the book-keeper, y'know—she writes in her own handwriting,

"'Dear Jake:

"'Why is it you don't drop in to see us no more? Have we done you something? We shall be in Thursday at two. Your friends,

"'Celestine and Coralie.'

"Mawruss mails the letter, and on Thursday at two he and Sol Finkelbein are sitting in the back office, when they hear shouts something awful in the store. They go out, and what should they see but Jake Cosmin's wife. Believe me, Louis, my Rosie is a good talker, and Beckie Plonsky, Abe Finkelstein's wife, is a good talker, ain't it, but Mrs. Cosmin that's an elegant A number one talker, Louis, and you bet she raised the devil. Camille in the theayter was nothing. What she didn't call them two Coralie and Celestine! Hussies was the least.

"Well, Mawruss he tries to get in a word once in a while, but it ain't no use.

"Finally she says: 'Where are they, them two, them Celestine and Coralie?'

"She stops a moment for somebody to answer, and Abe Finkelbein tries to explain.

"'I am Celestine,' he says, 'and this gentleman here is Coralie.'

"But you know Mawruss. He ain't happy to let nobody do the talking but himself.

"'Pardon me,' he says polite, like a doctor or a lawyer, 'Pardon me, madam, it's all a mistake. Celestine and Coralie ain't real women. They're just dummies.'

"'Dummies, they are!' Mrs. Cosmin shouts. 'Can dummies write letters?'

"Then she pulls out the letter that the book-keeper wrote to Jake Cosmin, and waves it around, shrieking something awful again.

"Well, Sol Finkelbein he puts his hand on her shoulder.

"'Mrs. Cosmin,' he begins, 'I give you my word of honor as a gentleman——'

"He don't get any further, though, Louis, for just as he says this, in comes Becky Plonsky, Sol's wife, and she sees Sol with his hand on Mrs. Cosmin's shoulder. Oo-ee, I tell you, Louis, that was a row. What Mrs. Cosmin says about Coralie and Celestine, Beckie Plonsky says about Mrs. Cosmin, and the things that Mrs. Cosmin forgets to say, Beckie Plonsky remembers yet. The next thing you know, there's hair pins all over the store, and Mawruss he gets a scratch down one side of his face, I bet you, you can see the mark of it yet.

"Well, they manage somehow to separate the two women. Mawruss, he grabs ahold of Mrs. Finkelbein. and Sol he is hustling Mrs. Cosmin out of the store, and having a hard time of it too, for she's got a whole lot more to say about Coralie and Celestine, as well as about Beckie Plonsky. But Sol he's just getting her through the door when Jake Cosmin arrives. He don't ask no questions, but seeing his wife fighting with Sol Finkelbein, he makes for Sol a couple of blue-eyes, and otherwise nearly kills him.

"That's all, Louis. The next week Sol says he's satisfied to lose a couple of thousand dollars, and offers Mawruss five thousand for his share of the business. They finally settle for fifty-five hundred, and if you don't believe it what I tell you, go and look on the south side of Thirty-third street.

"The *hats* is there, and the *21 Rue d'Hauteville, Paris,* is there, but *Celestine and Coralie* ain't there. It is *S. Finkelbein* now."

AHEAD OF DATE.

The Bookkeeper who looked into the future, and what he saw.

BY EDWARD BLOMEYER.

"SEVENTY-SEVENT' floor," announced the elevator boy, as the car slowed to a stop. Then, to his solitary passenger, "Step out, mister; dis is as high as I go. Dere's de door you want, right in front of you—dat's de visitors' room.

"Jest ask fer Mr. Cummins," he added, as the elevator door slammed shut with a bang.

Wholly dazed, and only partially conscious of his movements, George Thorpe stepped from the elevator, his mind busily searching for an explanation of his surroundings. Without knowledge of how or when he had come there, he had found himself, a few minutes before, in the lobby of the entrance to a towering office building, pushed and elbowed in a dozen different directions by a hurrying crowd of busy people. In his confusion, and more to get away from the rush and scramble than for any other reason, he had heeded the elevator boy's call of "Going up?" and had entered the car without a thought as to his destination or his actions after his arrival there.

Now, he looked about himself in surprised wonder. The scene was one totally strange and unfamiliar to him; he was unable to even hazard a guess as to where he was, or why he was there. Then his perplexed eyes fell upon the sign on the door to which he had been directed. It read:

AMERICO-EUROPEAN AERIAL
TRANSPORTATION CO.
VISITOR'S ROOM.

"Well," muttered the young man bewilderedly to himself, "since I'm into it this far, I might as well go the limit. Guess the elevator boy knew what he was talking about; anyway—here goes!"

He opened the door and walked in.

A young fellow who had been seated at a desk in the room came forward and smilingly greeted the visitor. "How are you?" he inquired pleasantly, "I'm glad to meet you; my name is Cummins—Andrew Cummins. Will you sit down, Mr. ——?"

"Thorpe—George Thorpe," supplied the visitor, taking the proffered seat.

"Stockholder, I presume?" asked Cummins.

"Well, no—not exactly—" stammered Thorpe, "you see——"

"Oh! that's all right," cut in the other. "You're welcome, anyway. I suppose you want to see the offices?"

"Well, if you're not too busy——"

"Not at all, Mr. Thorpe; I am employed for just that purpose. Come; if you're ready, we'll start right now. Just step this way if you please."

As the astonished young man followed his guide, his mind, dazed as it was by the recent happenings, still retained enough of its receptiveness to note the things, both queer and curious, which presented themselves at every turn. Imitating Cummins, he stepped on to a moving platform which ran rapidly but noiselessly along the great hall. Before a large door, high and wide, the guide stepped off and pressed a button. The door swung open without a sound, and they entered a long, high ceilinged room.

"Our correspondence department," announced Cummins.

Four rows of large, flat-topped desks extended the length of the room. At all of them were seated clerks, busily engaged with their work. The visitor was at once impressed by the comparative stillness of the room, from which there came no clatter or banging of typewriter keys, but only the low, subdued hum of a hundred softly modulated voices.

"Typewriters in another room, I suppose," he remarked.

The guide grinned. "Watch the man at that desk there," he answered.

The clerk hastily scanned a letter which he picked from a tray. Then he took up a long tube, having on its end an object not unlike the mouthpiece of a toy horn. This he placed to his lips, and into it he dictated what was presumably an answer to the letter in his hand. The dictation completed, he turned a small crank which projected from the side of his desk, and a sheet of letter paper, partly covered with typewritten matter, slipped out from a slit in a slightly

"The Manager, a Century Hence"

raised portion of the desk top. An envelope followed. The clerk, first pressing his right thumb on a handy rubber stamp pad, made an impression on the letter sheet. Then, with its envelope, the sheet was dropped into another opening in the side of the desk.

"What did he do?" asked the perplexed visitor.

"That sheet contained the letter he had just dictated," explained the guide, "it is now on its way through the compressed air tube to the general post-office, after having been folded, inserted in the envelope, and sealed, by machinery beneath the floor. The tube into which he talked leads to a phono-writer, a combination of the old style phonograph and typewriter, which received, recorded, and type-wrote the letter as it was dictated. A copy of the letter is now down in the filing room."

"But he didn't sign the letter."

"Oh, yes, he did! Didn't you notice him impress it with his thumb? His thumb print is a legal signature. However, for convenient identification, he wears a rubber ring which prints his name with the thumb mark. Of course, in case of dispute, the thumb print tells the tale. Just step this way, Mr. Thorpe."

"Ahead of Date"

As he turned to follow the young man, Thorpe's bewildered eyes rested on a mammoth calendar hung high on the wall at the far end of the room. The blood came to his head with a rush, and his eyes almost burst from their sockets, for he read in bold black print:

JULY 20TH, 2008.

"The accounting department," announced Cummins.

Thorpe found himself looking into a large square room, with handsome beamed metal ceilings. Through the outer walls, which were of thick glass almost opaque, the room was flooded with a soft, although ample, light. To the young man's surprise, the high desks and stools, with rows of backs bent over ponderous ledgers—the usual scene in the book-keeping room of a large concern—were absent. Instead, a number of men sat at low desks comfortable looking but curiously shaped, which were scattered about the floor, and from each desk came a subdued metallic clatter not unlike the sound of a typewriting machine. The scene was one of complete order and contentment.

"Where are the book-keepers?" he asked.

The guide laughed. "In museums, I suppose," he answered. "There are no book-keepers now—instead, we have 'mechanicants.' Since the Penrose law of 1952, providing that no person should keep a set of books for another person without a certificate of ability from the government, the old-time book-keeper has passed away. It is merely another case of the survival of the fittest. The mechanicant of today must not only be an expert in accounting, but must pass an examination as a machinist as well, as you will note that the book-keeping is done entirely by machinery. Those desks are merely shells for the Auto-Account device."

"The what?" gasped his listener.

"The book-keeping machine. Note that the loose-leaf book fits down into an opening in the top of the desk. By numbering each cross line and column in the book, the mere pressure of the proper line and column keys places the machine in position to make the posting at the right place. The entry is then made by pressing the keys for the amounts to be posted. The small selector key on the right hand of the machine turns the pages of the book to the next account wanted. Different machines are used for different books; the ledger machine, for instance, has special debit and credit keys which record and add all postings, showing at the close of the day whether or not the book is in balance. This machine also makes copies of all

postings, the duplicate sheets being used for monthly statements."

Thorpe sank weakly into a chair. "You must have large vaults," he hazarded, "to hold all those books."

Cummins smiled pleasantly. "We have no vaults at all," he replied, "and need none. There is not a stick of wood or a piece of inflammable material in this whole building."

"But the books—papers——"

"No paper is used. The sheets are made of asbestiline, a substance of recent invention. It is practically the same as paper, excepting that it is fireproof. The ink is a liquid compound of the same material. These books and documents will get red-hot, but never burn, and when cooled they are as legible and perfect as they were at first."

"But thieves—burglars——"

Know better than to bother us. All our documents and books are stored at night in steel filing cabinets. A secret switch, operated only with keys carried by certain officials of the company, sends a high voltage of electricity through every filing case in the offices until morning. The burglar who had the courage to try to plunder these rooms would bring his career to an end then and there."

"Now," he continued, "what do you say to a peep at the general manager in his office?"

Readily assenting, the visitor followed the guide across the room to an open door. The afternoon light, shining through the heavy glass outer wall, softly lighted the luxurious furnishings and fittings of the smaller room. The manager was seated at a desk in the center of his office; around him were a number of contrivances, curious looking to Thorpe, and their uses were, to him, a mystery. He turned to Cummins.

"What is that horn sticking out of his deck for?" he inquired.

"That!" The guide seemed surprised at the question. "Well, you are from the tall timber, sure enough! Why, that's an ampliphone!"

"An ampliphone," repeated the bewildered visitor.

"Certainly. It's just the same as the old-time telephone, excepting that it is wireless, and you can talk and hear from any part of the room. You can connect it with any other instrument within a radius of five hundred miles by simply turning a dial to make the combination used for the other ampliphone. Or, if you want to, you connect with a dozen, or a hundred, other instruments at the same time, providing none of them are in use. They're used a great deal these days for

"Climb in, man, it won't hurt you"

meetings of different kinds; folks just stay at home and attend the meeting by ampliphone."

Thorpe took the explanation calmly; he was getting used to surprises.

"That's a funny looking thing for a business office—that blackboard over there," he remarked.

Cummins grinned. "You mean the illustrograph, I guess," he said; "that's how the boss keeps tab on his employes. You see, that's nothing but a ground

glass screen, connected with the illustrograph mechines in each room. When the boss wants to know what's going on in any of the offices, he pushes the proper button, and a picture of the room shows on the screen. It's a little tough on the boys, but it saves the old man a lot of trips through the offices."

"What's the door in the outside wall for?"

"It leads to the manager's private air boat landing; to save time, he lands directly outside his own office. There's a mighty fine view from the platform! come, let's take a look at it!"

Thorpe followed, stepping gingerly out onto the landing, which was nothing more than a small square porch, without a railing. On it rested a peculiar looking machine, something like a small boat with half a dozen pairs of wings and a propellor like wheel on one end.

"The old man's air boat," said Cummins, answering Thorpe's questioning look; "step in, and we'll take a spin; I often use it."

Thorpe shook his head. "Not for me!" he replied, decisively.

"Why, climb in, man! It won't hurt you." The guide, already aboard the boat, reached out, and, despite the other's protests, pulled him in. There was a grinding whirr of machinery, and the boat plunged forward and off the platform. Dimly, through the rushing wind, Thorpe saw the ground, far below, flying up to meet them. While the guide worked desperately at the levers, Thorpe clung, paralyzed with fear, to the framework of the boat, and waited an hour—so it seemed to him—for the inevitable crash. And then—it came!

"George, wake up!" The voice seemed to come to him from far away. He felt a slight, sharp shock, and a tingling sensation, beginning near his shoulders, passed through his whole frame. He drowsily opened his eyes. His head was lying on his old ink-stained, oilcloth-covered book-keeping desk; he raised himself and looked with slowly returning senses around

the dingy, familiar little office in which he earned his daily bread.

"Doggone it! You must have been asleep all afternoon," came in grieved tones from his boss. "I just got here, and waked you up with a good slap on the back. What's the matter—sick?"

"No, sir; I'm all right," sleepily answered Thorpe. Then, in an undertone, he muttered to himself, "and blamed glad to be here, too. Little old 1908 is good enough for me. Darn a dream, anyway!"

Then he opened the general ledger with a bang.

JOHN HAKE, BUSINESS GAMBLER.

BY B. P. OWIE.

How the Purchasing Agent of a Railroad Company made a failure of his scheme to down a veteran in an Arkansas land deal on the option plan.

"I GUESS that will hold William Grimes, P. A., down to the level for a while.

"Try to hold me in the background on that old option gag while he gets control of just enough of the timber to make his own price with me or go into the business himself as a competitor, will he?"

John Hake spoke thus as he jammed a number of leases into his small traveling bag and climbed into a muddy old buggy preparatory to a 22-mile drive to the little station of Lockport down in Arkansas. Hake had spent the day with several farmers and had at the opening of this story just concluded a stroke of business which meant many thousands of dollars for the company of which he was the head.

Mr. Hake did not really need the money which the day's deal was sure to bring him. In fact, if it had meant the loss of an equal amount he would not have changed his tactics one bit. Hake had found that William Grimes, purchasing agent of the M. & N. M. railroad company, had tried to turn the tables on him in a business deal and he would not have hesitated for one moment at the expenditure of any amount of money in the battle to win.

He was a business gambler. He delighted in taking long chances and then staying in the game for the excitement of winning out. He clipped his coupons and did his voting in a northern metropolis, but was well known in the business communities of many cities. At the time of his encounter with Grimes he had just organized a company to erect a saw mill in a well-known lumber district in Arkansas, and had about closed a deal with the M. & N. M. railroad company

to supply it with railroad ties the quantity of which would keep the mill in operation for several years.

The directors of the company met in Memphis and Mr. Hake was on hand to close the deal. Before the board got together Grimes, the purchasing agent who had conceived a brilliant idea while the deal was still in progress, went to the directors and suggested that he could buy the timber in Arkansas as cheaply as Hake and could raft it down the river to Moundville where there was a saw mill which would turn out the ties at a price much lower than Hake had offered. Of course this was not explained to Hake, who was simply told by the president of the company that other matters would claim their attention at the meeting scheduled, and asked to have the matter stand—or in other words give them an option—for three days.

Now Mr. Hake did not need to exercise any great amount of his natural keenness to convince himself that unless he got up early and stayed up late something was going to happen to that lumber deal over in Arkansas. He could not tell just what it was, but he knew very well that a railroad that was just pining away for ties one week would not put the matter off unless there was something doing.

But what! That is exactly the question John Hake was asking himself for the hundredth time and had about decided that some other company had stepped into the game. The only thing he could not understand was how anyone could compete with his company. The timber he had secured over in Arkansas was obtained at such a ridiculously low figure that he could not see how any company could meet his price.

Hake's head was full of these problems and his apparent solution of them when he entered the hotel lobby after his return from the meeting. He was so engrossed with the matter that he did not notice a young man approaching from the opposite direction until he had collided with him. He was about to apologize for his seeming rudeness when the young man called him by name. Then he recognized him as

one of the clerks in the office of the M. & N. M. Company.

"You don't know me," said the young man, "but I know you. I am a clerk down in the offices of the M. & N. M. and have seen you there often. My name is Simpson."

Now if there was one thing which John Hake could do quicker than another it was to think. And think he did at that very time. Almost before he knew it Simpson was seated at a table in the hotel cafe with Mr. Hake opposite, and the pair was indulging in "the same." The latter was in quest of some valuable information which he felt sure that Simpson was in a position to yield up. He had no idea of making the young clerk purposely violate any of the confidences of the office and that is where his wonderful diplomacy came in again and served him well

"You down in Grimes' office?" he asked.

Simpson laughed right out. He had just tucked away his third greeting in the social intercourse and was as willing to talk as he seemed determined to laugh. "That's pretty good," he said as he laughed again. "Grimes' department. That's what Grimes calls it. He's bigger than the road and when he makes any reference to the purchasing department he calls it 'his.' But he's gone away for a week and we will have a little rest until he gets back. He went to Nashville this evening and before he gets back he's got to go over to Arkansas on some kind of a lumber deal."

Did Hake look wise? Not on your natural. He tumbled to the fact that whatever Simpson knew about the office he did not know the nature of the business which Hake had on hand and the latter did not break any records letting him in on it. What he did do was to get away from Simpson as quickly as possible and after a good night's rest he secured a supply of leases from a legal blank store and took the next train for Lockport.

"Guess I might as well tie the lumber industry of that part of Arkansas up into a hard knot if I can

beat Grimes down to where the mud is deep,'' he said as he boarded the train for his hours of travel on the road of few stations and which rarely stopped its trains until the tracks sunk so far down that the engineer could not see the rails.

''This old line needs something else besides ties,'' commented John Hake to himself, ''but I don't deal in filling in ground.''

Once when the train came to a slow-up at a cross-road Hake caught sight of a rustic seated on a farm wagon industriously sucking a lemon. Hake's mouth watered as he observed to the man in the seat in front of him. ''Isn't it strange that Providence should step in and present to one's vision a living emphasis of what is just at that very moment uppermost in one's mind? I was just thinking of how a certain chap was doing some tall stunts in an effort to hand me a lemon on a business deal, when the train gave a sudden lurch at that cross-road and right in front of my window was a fellow trying to secrete his countenance in an overgrown sample of just what that cuss thinks he's going to hand me.''

Just then an idea of some kind struck John Hake because he settled his gaze on the fast disappearing beauty of the sunset and said, ''After all, there are times when a lemon comes in right handy, but they were never grown to travel alone. Now you take a little sugar and some cracked ice, and a little bruised mint and—but what's the use? All I have is the remaining ingredient. Will you?''

''Reckon I will 'n darn glad,'' came from the stranger as he reached over for the proffered flask.

When it came time for the pair to talk again the train had pulled up at Lockport and Hake got out after bidding his traveling acquaintance good-bye.

Speaking of Lockport. It was a town of about 600 inhabitants when they were all home, and it swelled to about 800 on Saturday when the farmers all drove in with their families.

The question was never quite satisfactorily settled just why the town of Lockport and the railroad sta-

tion had not gotten closer together in the early days of their acquaintance. Some said that the half hour's ride between the two was due to the haste with which the surveyors went over the line, thereby disregarding the fact that the town lots had already been platted some distance to the south. Then, when the boomers saw what they declared was a direct affront on the part of the road, they held an indignation meeting and decided to start the town where they had first intended and make it grow away from the railroad. What little growing Lockport had indulged in was in strict accordance with the dictates of the boomers—hence the ride already referred to.

At the tavern John Hake failed to find anybody that looked like Grimes. Then he went over to the town livery and learned that both teams were in and had not been out during the day.

"I'm ahead of Grimes. He cannot possibly get here now until noon tomorrow unless he has a Marconi system up his sleeve, and by that time I will own that river if those farmers are susceptible to the velvety touch of the long green." He engaged a team and driver to be ready at daybreak and went to bed.

Down on the banks of the river the next morning there was considerable excitement among the farmers who, twelve in number, with their grown sons gathered and asked each other what was coming. The night before Hake had quietly dispatched two men on horseback to get to the farmers as quickly as possible and notify them to meet on the property of one of the number whose place was the most central.

The men on horseback did their work well. The fact that they made a mystery of the object of Hake's visit was no fault of theirs. They had not been told what he wanted. "Get them all in one bunch," was all he had said.

"Wonder 'f he wants t' back out the timber deal?" asked one.

"Not with me," said another. "Tax collector's got mine, an' b'sides a deal's a deal."

Finally John Hake drove up. The crowd clustered

around him as he stepped from the buggy. They were not kept long in waiting. Hake, as already stated, was a man of action.

"Gentlemen," he said, and he used the same diplomacy he would have exercised at a gathering of officials, "I have traveled back among you because I have found that my company will have to make a new arrangement that will be better for us all. The fact is, we will have to locate our mills nearer the river than we at first expected."

The farmers looked at each other in the "I told you so" way which recalled the talk of the two men early in the morning when they advanced their views on the object of the gathering.

Hake noticed the glances and smiled. He knew what the farmers expected and he knew that when he had finished his talk it would be all off with Grimes.

"You all own your land clear to the water front, and collectively you own fully five miles each way from the point about due north from here. Here's my new proposition. I want to employ all of you who can be spared from the farms during the lumber season which is about to open, and I find that we will have use for ten miles of the water front. These logs cannot be hauled a very great distance and must be rafted. My company does not want anything that it does not pay for, and my object in coming back so soon is to offer you a fair price for the use of the water front, and secure leases for it. What do you think would be a fair annual rental payable in advance every six months?"

Was John Hake wise? Not one of the rustics could imagine just what he was driving at until he had finished, and all the time he was talking money. They talked it over, during which time the entire party walked down to the river banks a quarter of a mile away as if to find the solution in the waters.

Finally one of the fellows—the one who had said considerable about a deal being a deal—said he was a mind to let it go for just enough to make the lease

legal. "Mr. Hake," he said, "has already agreed to pay us a fair price for our timber and most of us are to git work from him. I don't b'lieve it's square to make him pay for the use of that river front if he allows us to keep on drivin' our stock down there as we are now when we want to."

When Mr. Hake agreed to that last proposition and went a little further and agreed to pay an annual rental of $20 a mile for the leases of the water front, and to pay it in advance every six months, he started a regular love feast. The party trudged back to the farm house where the leases were signed and the money paid, Hake taking a receipt from each of the farmers for the amount he received.

Some of the party suggested that they draw the buggy a few miles up the road just to show Hake that they thought he was the real goods, but he wouldn't have it that way. The only one who seemed to think the thing was a joke was the driver of the buggy. He smiled when Hake folded up the leases and climbed into the buggy as he mumbled to himself the words with which our story opens. Then it was that the driver laughed louder than ever.

The journey to Lockport was completed before dark, as the horses had had quite a rest. Hake took the driver and the two fellows who made the round-up into the tavern, and after asking them what he owed them and being told, paid them each more than double. Hake was also known as a man willing to split the profits of a good thing.

"No train for Memphis until morning," he mused as he went to his room to tidy up a bit. "What's the odds? How I would love to see Grimes about now."

And in another instant he was on his way to the dining-room, at the door of which he was again reminded of the strange act of Providence which steps in and presents to one's vision a living emphasis of what is just at that moment uppermost in one's mind. In other words, he nearly fell over Grimes in the doorway.

The purchasing agent colored up considerably.

Lockport was the last place in the world one would expect to find the purchasing agent of a railroad. The section boss would be all right, but not the buyer.

Hake appeared surprised, but he wasn't. Few things in the world could surprise Hake and none of them were to be found around Lockport. He had felt that Grimes was about due in the vicinity, and when he thrust his hand down into his trousers pocket where it came in contact with the roll of bills, he thought of Simpson and his unconscious tip, and made a mental resolution to tender the clerk a substantial vote of thanks on his return to Memphis.

Mr. Hake, it might be mentioned right here, was no more diplomatic than he was affable, and he made a beeline for the table which Grimes was headed for.

"Going back to Memphis in the morning?" asked Grimes.

"Yes," replied Hake. "I would go tonight if I could get out, as my business here is over. I want to see you folks at the earliest possible moment and get back home."

"Getting tired of the south?" came back from Grimes.

"I've no kick coming from a business standpoint," replied Hake, "but I want to get home."

"Don't like southern hospitality, eh?" continued Grimes.

"My dear boy," said Hake, who began to think that Grimes was trying to have fun with him, "I like hospitality anywhere, but I want to define it as it appeals to me. It's something you read about in the south and only find in the north. Going back on the morning train?"

"No," said Grimes, "my business will keep me here tomorrow and perhaps the next day."

The rest of the evening meal was eaten in silence, and at its conclusion Hake said, "Well, Grimes, if you are going to stay over I can recommend Jones as a good driver."

"What makes you think I want a driver?" asked Grimes.

"Because if you go anywhere in this country except here in Lockport you have got to drive. And if you are going down into the timber country," and Hake grinned maliciously, "you'll have to drive and drive damn fast to get ahead of Hake."

"What do you mean?" asked Grimes angrily.

"Mean?" fairly yelled Hake, "mean! I mean that while you were chasing around Nashville and Moundville I've been a busy man. Only a few hours ago I bought not only the remaining timber within 22 miles of this railroad, but I removed the limit and bought the river. I can't regulate the flow of the stream, Grimesey, my boy, but I can have a lot to say about who's going to raft logs from this county. Better come back to Memphis with me. That option expires in 48 hours, you know, and if you stay here half that time there's going to be a raise in the price of ties that will not reflect with credit to you as a purchasing agent. Good night."

Grimes did not believe what Hake said, and that's where he lost out. He went to the office of the tavern to write a letter to the president of the road which would go to Memphis on the same train with Hake. "I'll block him," said Grimes to himself as he prepared to write.

The letter had hardly been started when Grimes was interrupted by the talk of three men who stood at the drinking bar at the other side of the room. They were the man Jones who drove Hake that day, and the two men who went ahead into the lumber territory on horseback.

Jones was the first to speak after Grimes got into the room and took a seat at the writing table. "He's a world beater," Jones was saying. "Think of a man leasin' a river of real running water."

Grimes looked up.

"Yes," said one of the others, "and the reckless way he handles money beats all. Why, he must 'a got rid of mor'n a hundred dollars today."

"I tell you," replied Jones, "he's a world beater. You know I put in some years away from home over

in Memphis and N'Orleans, and I'm right here to tell you I know the real thing. First I thought I'd been smokin' ag'in and was dreamin' of glidin' down a stream on a moss covered log that was 'a dodgin' water lilies. Once I went to sleep that way in N'Orleans after one of them pill smokes and I lost a million dollars through a feller in the bunk under me who was tryin' to give a blind girl five millions and he made such a fuss about it that he rolled out on the floor and woke me up just as I was countin' my money."

"I'm pretty near ready to pinch myself now. Ten dollars for a day's drivin' to give a feller a chance to buy up the river bank."

Grimes looked up again.

The man who had been supplying the drinks from back of the bar overheard the conversation, and going back to the cash drawer begun to examine the last bill handed over by Jones.

"Think's bad?" said Jones. "Think b'cause a man's willin' to pay well for work that's well done, that he's usin' homemade money? Why, that fellow couldn't begin to make all the money he's got, even if he was to work at it for a whole year. I'll bet he's got 'nough in his pockets now that if he chucked it all in the firebox of old number 8 in the morning, she could make Memphis without stoppin' to coal up. His stuff's what they call long green down in N'Orleans, and he knows how to let go."

This time Grimes got up.

He went to his room and tried to convince himself that the men had been posted in the office by Hake just to annoy him, and after debating the question in his own mind, decided to carry out his original program. He was out and gone before daybreak and Jones was the driver.

When Hake reached Memphis he went at once to the hotel. "If Grimes will only keep away until tomorrow night the price of ties to the M. & N. M. railroad will go up like a hot air balloon at a county fair, and Grimes will resemble the acrobat who comes down with the parachute which fails to open up."

Grimes played directly into Hake's hand by remaining away until it was too late to take advantage of the option. Hake went to the offices of the M. &. N. M. railroad on the last day of grace and seemed very much surprised when the president told him the matter would be taken up and disposed of the next afternoon when Mr. Grimes returned.

Grimes got back late that night and on the following morning went to the president and without telling all the facts, told that official that his deal could not go through and advised that a contract be made with Hake for the ties.

In the afternoon when Hake put in an appearance the president told him he was ready to sign the contract at the figures named in the original agreement.

"Sorry," said Hake, "but since those prices were quoted ties have advanced 25 per cent."

"But we have an option," said the president hotly, addressing Mr. Hake.

"You did have until midnight," said Hake, "but since then the market has fluctuated in my favor." Then for the second time Hake almost lost his temper.

"You fellows," he fairly yelled, "tied me up with an option and then went to work to get possession of some of my plans and throw me to my knees where I would have to take anything you felt disposed to offer or lose out. I tell you right now that your company has got to buy your ties from me at 25 per cent advance or build a railroad 35 miles long over into the next county to haul your logs. There was a time when you could raft them down the river to Moundville, but that's past. The water is still there and it's free, but I own the banks."

The contract was signed.

THE STRIKE AT LA PLACE'S.

BY EDGAR MATTHEW KEATOR.

When a strike is declared at a hat factory in the fall of the year, at which time orders are tumbling in for spring goods, there is likely to be a deal of talk on the part of the superintendent that is hardly printable.

Rice, the "super" of the La Place hat factory, had been in his position a little over a year, and had so far avoided trouble with the men and given satisfaction to the firm. A strike might jeopardize his position and cause thousands of dollars' loss to the company that employed him.

The mechanics from every department wanted a raise in price for their work, and despite his argument that the cost of materials had so far advanced that to pay them more was impossible, they still demanded the increase.

A committee from every division of the works had visited him, and everyone had refused to listen to the plea that more could not be paid.

A "general" committee, made up of the chief men of the room or division committees, had just announced to Rice that unless their demand was acceded to immediately, a strike would be declared.

"What you demand is impossible," said Rice to the spokesman. "Give me a couple of hours' time, and I'll show you a statement of costs of materials and labor. Ten cents a dozen more in every branch of manufacture would drive us out of business."

"Your statement be damned," said a surly fellow named Sparks. "We don't want no piece of paper to show us what we're entitled to. Come on, fellers," said he, turning to the men. "Don't let him do yer out of yer rights. We'll close yer place up, that's what we'll do."

"One moment," said Rice quietly. "If you go on

strike, we won't be the only ones to suffer. It will mean thousands of dollars to us; but it will mean starvation to a good many of you. Don't only consider yourselves in this matter. Think of the claim of those who are dependent on you."

"Oh, ter hell with yer!" said O'Hanron, a bulldog-faced man, and the chief strike disturber. He walked out of the superintendent's office followed by the others. Rice's face burned with insult, but he held fast to his temper. Half an hour later the men had all left the works.

Rice did not go home that night. He telephoned an advertisement to every paper in town to be inserted in the following morning's editions. It was a call to union or non-union hatters to take the places of those who had struck.

Late into the night he watched the strikers talking in groups in the street and wondered if the following night would be as peaceful.

Some of the strikers remained around the works until morning, and those who had gone home were on hand at sunrise. Every person who was suspected of applying for a position was either persuaded not to go into the factory or forcibly restrained. They even tried to hold up the engineer, but he satisfied them in some way that he could do their cause no good by joining them, and they let him pass.

This fellow, O'Hanron, had been a thorn in Rice's side for many a day. It was practically impossible to discharge him, for to do so would have precipitated trouble with the union, of which he was an officer. The men feared him, and they invariably did his bidding, no matter how unreasonable.

For some time a rumor had been current in the works that O'Hanron was a jail bird; that he had served one term in state's prison for larceny and another for some other offense. Proofs of this were sought by Rice, who had no doubt that the information would be effective in getting rid of the chief disturber. He determined to have a talk with the man at the earliest moment.

Not a person had succeeded in getting by the pickets of the strikers, and Rice now resolved to go out himself and try to obtain a new force of men. He looked out of the window at the ominous crowds of strikers along the street. They were noisy and looked dangerous. Rice slipped a revolver into his coat pocket, and then with not a little trepidation, stepped into the street.

The door had hardly closed on him than he was seized. The infuriated men kicked and beat him. He cried for help, but the few policemen on duty were powerless. From a wound in his forehead the blood trickled into his eyes and mouth. He struggled manfully, and, as one fellow, who had him by the coat collar, turned momentarily, Rice kicked his feet from under him. He ran with all his might for the entrance to the works, but a burly fellow jumped in front of the door.

The superintendent saw that the situation was desperate. The men were angered beyond all reason. They had an unconscionable desire to kill him. He pulled his revolver and fired at the fellow who was obstructing the doorway. The shot missed him, but it stayed, for an instant, the onrush of the crowd. Rice took advantage of the lull to put his back against the building.

"I'll kill the first man that advances a step beyond the crowd," cried the superintendent. The throng surged back and forth, advancing little by little on Rice.

"Now, listen!" said he, his face ghastly with dry blood. "Do you think you will accomplish anything good by these methods? I'll see every one of you hanged before I'll let you conquer me. That factory's going to run. It's going to get out the orders that are in it, and it's going to do these things despite any pack of striking cowards!"

The men were sullenly silent during this speech, and then O'Hanron spoke up.

"Der yer hear that, men? He'll fill yer benches

with scabs. Yer'll see yer wives and children starve. Are yer goin' ter stan' by an' see him do it?''

''No!'' cried the crowd in unison.

''Lynch him!'' yelled some.

''Kill him!'' howled others. About a foot above Rice's head was a closed office window. To jump up to this and then scramble into the office would be but the work of a few seconds; but to do so it would be necessary for Rice to turn his back to the strikers, and such an act might be fatal.

Making a motion as though to shoot into the throng, the superintendent fired his revolver a little above the heads of the crowd. They recoiled, and before they were aware of his purpose, he was on the window-sill. They roared with rage and charged down upon him. The air was thick with sticks and stones.

Rice kicked the glass in and jumped into the office. A speaking tube connecting with the engineer's room was near at hand. Rice blew into it with all the power of his lungs.

''What's up?'' called the engineer.

''Put the fire hose onto the hot water cock and pump like hell,'' yelled the superintendent.

''All right.'' The fire hose hung in a convenient place from the wall. Rice pulled it down. Every window in the office was broken. Stones, sticks, and bits of iron came through the openings and littered the floor. A burly hat sizer, more reckless than the rest, had made his way to the office. He had a ''plank pin'' in his hand; a heavy, wooden stick an inch and a half in diameter.

''Get out of here!'' commanded Rice, swinging the hose nozzle threateningly around his head. The fellow threw the pin at him and then tried to get to the street through the window. While he was in the act of clambering through, the hot water shot out of the hose and struck him in the back of the neck. The crowd outside had been waiting his appearance, and when they saw him fall through the window they thought the man was stark mad. As he disappeared, Rice ran to the window and pointed the hose at the

strikers. As the water hit them they scattered in every direction, howling and cursing with anger and pain.

The superintendent was alone save for the engineer —the clerks had not returned to their tasks—and Rice had to call upon him to sit at the window and keep the mob away while he telephoned for help.

More policemen were asked for and sent, who succeeded in keeping the strikers fairly under control. From the window Rice beckoned to an officer. When he came he said:

"Tell O'Hanron I want to see him. The strikers will point him out to you or tell him for you." In about an hour O'Hanron came sullenly into the office, a policeman keeping him company.

"O'Hanron," said Rice when they were alone, "I want to have a talk with you about your familiarity with prisons." The man looked as though someone had hit him. "Haven't you been in jail?" continued Rice.

"What's that your business?" said O'Hanron with an ugly grin.

"Only this, that I have pretty good reason to believe that your name is no more what you pretend it is than mine. I have succeeded in getting pretty good evidence of your escape from jail, and am quite sure that certain officers in another section of this country would treat you as a welcome guest of their prison."

"Well," said O'Hanron, "What yer going to do about it?"

"Oh, nothing very much. If you persist in hanging around these works or in this town I might tell what I know to the police. Twenty-four hours are about long enough, I reckon. I don't believe I could keep such a bit of news longer than that unless certain conditions that I have mentioned are complied with."

Sullenly the man walked out of the office, his ugly face twisted with the effort to control his rage. The bluff had worked; and with him out of the way Rice knew resistance would be very much weakened. He drew up and had printed, a statement of the cost of

materials and labor for the present year and the year previous. It was a convincing argument, and when distributed among the strikers was not without its effect.

With no one to harangue them, and the strike unpopular among their womenfolk, some of the men began to apply for their old positions. As fast as they came in they were put to work.

Rice wrote a letter to a hat manufacturing concern which the men claimed was paying their men more than La Place for the same grade of work, yet were getting no more for their hats. When their letter came in reply, he had it duplicated and distributed among them. The letter ran thus:

"Mr. Bernard Rice, Superintendent of the La Place Hat Works.

"Dear Sir:—Yours of even date is at hand. We are paying ten cents more a dozen all around than you are, but we get fifty cents more a dozen than you for our hats. Consequently, we think your men have very little to complain of. If you wish any further information do not hesitate to command us. Very truly yours,....."

In less than a week the factory was running as smoothly as it ever had. No order had been held up long enough to cause a delay in delivery in the spring, and it was with a feeling of ease that Rice sat down to his desk Saturday morning. The first letter he opened ran thus:

"My Dear Mr. Rice: I have just arrived home after a most delightful trip in the mountains. I am deeply gratified at your conduct of the strike, as learned from my partner, who judiciously remained away during the trouble. After talking the matter over with him, I have come to the conclusion that you would better serve us by becoming one of us. We are about to incorporate the business, and it is my partner's, as well as my desire, that you be made an officer of the corporation. You will kindly meet us at the retail office 10 o'clock Wednesday next. Very truly yours, Richard La Place."

DRIVER OF THE BAND WAGON.

BY J. E. BROWN.

A Story of Advertising, Narrating How Sam Sax, Jr., Found Himself.

"Did it take you seven years to buy that plug of tobacco for me?" said old man Sax, when he first cast eyes on the returning prodigal.

"I don't think you've brought much change back, either," he added, reflectively, looking keenly at the general woe-begone appearance of his first-born.

"I never had much genius for money-making," said the young man, "but I've earned my living honestly while I've been away, and that's something."

"Yes," said the old man, "but you've evidently earned mighty little else. What you been doing?"

"Tried clerking first. No good. Had a row with the manager on general principles. I got to know a journalist, and since then I've been traveling around, doing odd jobs—principally writing for papers."

"Don't seem to be much in it. You never got that streak from me. Your mother's responsible, I guess. Showed me some poetry she had printed once; but the magazine people forgot to pay her for it. You been up against the same thing?"

"Sometimes," said the young man, evidently anxious to change the subject. "What's the latest with you? I heard something about your mining career through the papers a year ago."

"You did?" said the old man, losing his temper; "then why in thunder were you so long coming here?"

"Hold hard, father," said the boy. "It's pretty hard for one of my stock to acknowledge defeat."

"Yes, there's something in that," said the old man, with a softened tone of voice. "I don't blame you in a way. But why didn't you let me know? I might have helped you to get an interest in a paper."

"I was editor of one for six months, and lost my position through speculating in mining stock."

"Whose?"

"The United States Investment Company."

"Well, that's the limit from a son of mine. Didn't you know they were bitter competitors of mine? Only had a few holes in the ground—but that wasn't because they didn't try mighty hard to get my claims away from me. Didn't you hear they were fighting me?"

"It's not necessary to ask a question like that, father. Of course, I didn't. I read some of their literature, and got enthusiastic over the prospect. Borrowed considerable. Company smashed up, and when my financial predicament became known I had to leave the paper. It's taken 18 months' hard work to get straight. But I owe no one a cent now."

"Literature," said old man Sax. "Yes, that was the curse with the Investment crowd. They got out mighty fine 'gold brick' reading matter, and raked in the money, too. Why, the old man who founded the company took away $150,000 a short time before the crash came. Some of yours, too, I guess, now. Every penny of the money was stolen from people who couldn't tell gold dust if they were to see it.

"You ought to have seen the bunch who came out one Sunday to view the prospects. Everyone who was willing to invest $1,000 or more got free transportation from anywhere and back. The heads of the concern were busy for two days that week before the crowd came out, blowing gold dust into the earth. You should have heard the mob cheer when a rascally assayer proved before their eyes that there were so many ounces of gold to the ton. I told the sheriff about it; but I guess he was 'fixed,' too, from the way he acted.

"The finish came after they paid two quarterly dividends out of the capital. The old man left his boys to fight the matter out in the law courts; but, bless you, what could the stockholders prove as to where the money had gone? There was a big heap of second-

hand machinery, fit for the scrap-heap, representing the biggest asset on the credit side of the company's statement."

"What's your position, father?"

"Worth a solid hundred thousand in the Bank of Nevada, and could sell the claims as they stand for nearly double that amount. But it's not one-half of what I ought to be worth if these claims were only properly exploited. Can't get the financial backing necessary to put in sufficient machinery and enough men to work the mines. I might use up that money in the bank; but it wouldn't go nearly far enough. I need some of those Wall and La Salle street capitalists behind me. Some I wrote admitted it looked as though I had good prospects; but I never pushed 'em very hard to come in. I've been somewhat scared of those promoters. Have a personal acquaintance with three fellows who got gently handed the frosty hand when that kind took hold of the steering gear.

"Something's got to be done, though, if we're ever really going to push this business for all it's worth. Why, my partner, who's been with me for five years, went home last week with a draft on a Canadian bank for not one-half he should have realized. Simply tired and disgusted of working and waiting."

Sax, Junior, remained silent for a few minutes, only half listening to the old man as he went on speaking of the possibilities that lay in his claims. It was evident some big idea had gripped his imagination.

"Going away tonight?" said Sax, Senior, an hour later to his son. "Won't stay, eh? Got car fare and lunch money?"

"Yes. Guess I'll make Chicago tomorrow."

Two days later a young man might have been seen busy in the vicinity of La Salle street, Chicago, talking to bankers and company promoters. Within a short time he had secured an engagement with an advertising concern at a small salary, on the understanding that he was to be specially assigned to any financial advertising that could be secured. He spent his nights poring over the mysteries of modern finance,

and particularly those details relating to mines and mining.

Ten months after his son's visit the old man received a neat, well-printed booklet from "The Financial Advertising Company," manager, Sam Sax, Jr. There was also a full review of the possibilities of a strong and judicious advertising campaign to obtain more capital—so that the Sax mines might be worked to better advantage. The letter which accompanied the statement and booklet was a marvel of strong English and keen, convincing logic. It was read by Sax, Senior, at least a dozen times.

A week after the letter in question was mailed a young man might have been seen getting off a train stopping near the Sax claims, and late the same night a consultation between father and son took place which lasted until well into the small hours of the morning.

"Guess that's where I've been short, though the world knew little of advertising when I was a youngster," said the old man at length. "It's past me, though, and I'm too old to learn now."

"You mean to drive the band-wagon, don't you?" he added energetically. "Sort of act as master of drawing-room ceremonies while I look after things in the basement. You wear go-to-meeting clothes, show specimens of quartz, and get more capital into the business. I don't know but what I might try you out. Mind, though, if you fail to swing the deal, back you go to the newspapering and advertising business."

Three weeks after the midnight consultation a young man, elegantly dressed, was working early and late in a well-furnished suite of offices in Wall Street, New York City. Every morning in the daily papers and financial journals appeared well-worded, strong, confidence-inspiring advertisements setting forth the merits of the Sax claims in Nevada.

Thousands of small and large investors were receiving copies of the new company's prospectus—an unusually meritorious specimen of persuasive, well-written, confidence-inspiring advertising literature.

The arguments used were hot with enthusiasm and evidently inspired by truth.

In La Salle street, Chicago, a young journalist with whom Sax, Junior, had often broken a $10 bill when the pair were hard up, was repeating the same operation with western fortune-seekers. A stream of money, small at first, but growing bigger every day, began to pour into the treasury of the young concern.

The advertising campaign was undoubtedly well managed. Never before had Sax, Junior, dreamed that his past experience could be so valuable to him. Never had he dreamed he could write such forceful English, or meet a total stranger in his office, and by the sheer force of truth and word-painting of scenes he had actually viewed, be able to converse with that stranger as though he had known him all his life. So potent was his language and arguments that almost invariably before the stranger left he had obtained a substantial deposit on a more or less large amount of the company's stock.

Gradually the amount paid in swelled to large dimensions. At the end of two months it was $100,000; at the end of three, $240,000, and when the final share of stock was sold, Sax, Junior, sent a telegram to the old man announcing that fact, and signing the message with his own name.

In a few hours' time a yellow envelope was handed to him by a telegraph messenger.

"Come home for a spell," ran the message. "Going to give you one-third interest in my share. You're a mighty good man for the band-wagon. Sax, Senior."

THE SIXTH FLOOR ELEPHANTS.

BY EDGAR DAYTON PRICE.

"It's ruin, ruin!" groaned Goldberg.

"Looks about that way," admitted the secretary.

"How much are we going to be short of paying those notes falling due the first of April?" asked the president, wearily.

"Thirty thousand dollars," said the secretary.

"Thirty thousand dollars!" almost screamed the president of Goldberg's department store. "Mr. Ketcham, we don't owe the banks that sum falling due so soon——"

"Yes, we do, for half of it is acceptances of ours we renewed the first of the year after the poor holiday trade. You were in Florida, and I wrote you about it if you will remember."

"I don't remember," said the president, peevishly. "I am a sick man and my business is going to pieces in the hands of miserable inefficients. You——"

"My money is here, too," said the secretary, flushing. "I think my ruin will be more complete than yours if we go to the wall—it's the weather conditions primarily that have tied us up so; an unexpected warm winter with us loaded to the limit with cold weather goods. Then, Mr. Appleby, our advertising man, has been—er—rather deficient in ideas to bring people into the store—I don't know that I could have done any better."

"Go on, go on, explain; all I can understand is that I am ruined—this fine business that I spent 25 years to build up——"

"Appleby is leaving us tomorrow night," said the secretary. "I have been advertising for a bright man to take his place, and if I can get a smart copy writer and stimulate interest in some special marked-down sales—get the goods off the shelves and counters at any price—perhaps—perhaps—"

"I have no faith; you are all miserable inefficients," stormed the president, and flung himself out of the private office where the two officials had been examining the papers showing the store's doleful condition. An hour later word came over the telephone that Mr. Goldberg had taken to his bed.

"I guess it's up to me to sink or swim," said Ketcham at the news. "Mrs. Goldberg owns this fine six-story store, basement and two extensions, so they'll have something to fall back on if we smash. As for me and my $20,000 interest——" he shrugged his shoulders suggestively.

"Er—young man to see you," said the head book-keeper, opening the door. "I told him you were engaged, but he said——"

"Show him in," said the secretary. The permission was wasted, for the young man was inside and calmly pushing the book-keeper out and closing the door.

"Mr. Ketcham, secretary," said the young man, "I am Harold Barker, 23, American, from New York City, borough of Manhattan——"

"Oh, are you?" said the secretary. "Well, what do you want?"

"That job as advertising man," said Harold, promptly.

"How—how—do you know we want one?" asked the secretary. "We are advertising for a man," he admitted, "but the applications are to be sent to a box number at the different paper offices."

"That don't go with me," said Mr. Barker, with decision. "My way is to get in first and get the job, so I just showed a half-dollar to the office boys down in the Star office promising it to the boy who identified the chap who came for the answers to 'Capable Adwriter.' My coin went quick when your boy with the buttons and 'Goldberg' on his cap came in, and—here I am."

"Excuse me, the messenger boy just brought these," interrupted the book-keeper, opening the door and laying a big bunch of letters on Mr. Ketcham's desk.

"You needn't look at 'em," said Mr. Barker; "just hire me."

The secretary was amused in spite of himself at the easy assurance of the young man before him.

"Just mention your qualifications, if you don't mind," he said.

"I don't write advertisements," premised the visitor.

"Ah, quite a recommendation for the place," said Mr. Ketcham.

"Pooh! you've plenty of clerks who can write newspaper stuff illustrated by the dinky little cuts, but let me ask you if you've got anybody who can fill the newspapers with articles that you don't pay a cent for; articles that will bring the crowds here—jam the outfit from sub-basement to roof——"

The secretary sat up.

"No, we haven't," he said. "Do you think you can?"

"I can," said Mr. Barker, concisely; "no crowds, no pay."

"Suppose you take me into your full confidence," said the secretary, smilingly opening a box of cigars and pulling up a chair. The office force were surprised to hear hearty laughs coming from the private office, some obviously emanating from the glum secretary. An hour passed and the door opened and Harold Barker, American, 23, etc., etc., emerged, followed by the secretary, who introduced the young man to the head book-keeper in due form.

"Mr. Barker is to have charge of the advertising, Mr. Brown," said Mr. Ketcham. "Introduce him to the heads of the departments and see that he has a key to let himself in with after hours, and be sure that the watchman understands the arrangement—Mr. Barker is liable to make overtime until he learns the ropes. Also, you will honor Mr. Barker's requisitions for money up to $300, Mr. Brown."

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Brown, and led Mr. Barker away. The newly hired flashed an eagle eye over everything in the commodious building, the large and

powerful elevators and the little-used stairs which wound about them from cellar to roof, the wide aisles, the heaped counters and shelves and the idle clerks. He noted a life-sized stuffed elephant in the rug department with interest and was positively delighted when he discovered a crack in one corner of the biggest plate glass window Goldberg's boasted.

"Dead loss," said Mr. Brown, waving his hand at the window. "The insurance was overlooked and of course somebody heaved a stone and now we've got to put in a new plate at our own expense."

"I've a notion to have that elephant put into the window, and then dress like an East Indian and heave bricks through the glass—that would be good," said the impulsive Harold. Mr. Brown stared.

"Of course, a real elephant and a real East Indian would be better," said Mr. Barker, noticing.

"Well," said the bookkeeper, "four elephants and four East Indians would be four times better—there's an elephant stunt going to be done at the vaudeville next week—the people in this town are weak about elephants—bang! smash! busted window, cascade of elephants! Say, young fellow, do you ever hit the pipe?"

"Oh, by golly! Oh, oh!" said Mr. Barker, smitten with an idea.

"I've got to get back to my work," grumbled the head book-keeper disgustedly. "Say, you're a peach to have charge of a department store advertising, but if Mr. Ketcham can stand you I can. Good day."

"Oh, wow!" said Mr. Barker, who seemed pleased with himself. "Won't I be after those 300 bones in the morning, all right?" he shouted after the retreating Mr. Brown. He was as good as his word and after a long confab with Mr. Ketcham and an all-afternoon session in the bowels of the building in the company of the engineer, a smart young Irishman by the name of Delaney, he had the stuffed elephant moved into the show window and then disappeared.

The down-town streets blazed with electric lights and as the hour of eight approached they filled with

people on pleasure bent, hurrying to the different theaters and other places of amusement. A keen wind sent clouds of snow scurrying—snow that was due in January and February now coming down in March—to the joy of those who felt they had been cheated of their winter.

There was a pause in the hurry and bustle as around the corner of the street leading from the union freight yards came a procession of shuffling, whining elephants on their way to the vaudeville show. The creatures were wrapped to the tips of their snouts, but were evidently cold and uncomfortable, breaking into trumpetings as their mahouts jabbed them with the barbed elephant goads. Following them came the ubiquitous small boy in crowds, older people stepped to the curb to gaze, trolley cars slowed up, congesting traffic, and frightened horses reared and ran at the sight of the mountains of flesh.

The stuffed elephant in the Goldberg department store window looked cosy and comfortable by comparison. It stood embowered in palms and tropical green, howdah on back and trunk thrown up either to trumpet defiance or catch peanuts, and the sight of it to the cold-footed live creatures in the street was gall and wormwood. There was a halt in the march and a scattering in the crowd following, at the shrill and angry trumpetings. The mahouts goaded and struck in vain—lithe snouts were feeling about for missiles—like one elephant the creatures charged at the Goldberg window—crash!—crash!—rip!—jingle jingle!

The broken glass tinkled, leaving a great opening through which charged the attacking elephants. In an instant the stuffed imitation was undergoing a rending and tearing and the palms and vegetation being trampled underfoot. The Goldberg watchman came racing from the basement from a confab with Delaney, the engineer, who was making some repairs. He went white at the sight of the bulky forms rioting in the windows and tottered to the office, where he managed to turn in a fire and police call. The sight of the elephants leaving the windows in his direction gave his

feet wings and he broke through the crowd outside and disappeared. The big creatures pad-padded about the department store, pulling down the piled goods with their trunks, regardless of the despairing mahouts who shrieked shrill commands in vain. Then, to add to the confusion, every light in the building went out.

Fire apparatus and police patrols came rattling up and the men piled into the Goldberg store only to pile out again at the uncanny trumpeting of the elephants happy in the warm atmosphere and busy at destruction. A cordon was formed outside and no one allowed to put foot inside—a most unnecessary precaution. The Goldberg department store was left a new and charming jungle for the performing elephants until daylight should come and their keepers restore them to reason. The keen wind blew and the snow fell and gradually the crowd departed, leaving the official watchers and the newspaper reporters. Slowly the hours dragged by until the tardy daylight came, and with daylight came a surprise—the elephants had disappeared!

Goldberg's opened for business as usual with the arrival of the curious clerks who had read the events of the night as "scareheaded" in the morning papers. Mr. Harold Barker came early, looking rather careworn as a man might who had slept badly or not at all. He jumped as he saw the tumbled goods on the main floor.

"Fine! fine!" he said. "Everybody get a hustle and take account of the damage and we will have an elephant damage sale!" Mr. Ketcham, who had just bounced in, newspaper in hand, took fire in a minute.

"The very thing," he laughed. "I guess very few people have ever had the chance of attending that kind of a sale, so mark the tumbled goods down 50 per cent —what's that?"

An elevator cage was coming down the shaft on the top speed. It stopped at the main floor and spilled a shrieking bunch of employes from the sixth floor—the stock floor where goods were opened.

"The elephants! the elephants!" they howled.

"Be quiet! What do you mean?" said the secretary, authoritatively.

"They're up on the top floor!"

"Nonsense!—how could they get there?" asked Ketcham, severely.

"We don't know—but—but——"

"Somebody go up and investigate," said the secretary. A cage load of volunteers got together, mostly newspaper reporters, and shot upwards. Twenty minutes later the cage came down and the reporters dashed for their respective newspapers.

"They're up there, sure enough," they said, "all four!"

It was a great mystery. The stairs were out of the question, being too narrow for the bulky creatures. It was silly to suppose they had taken the elevators, yet, there they were, good as kittens now, roaring petitions for breakfast. Their mahouts were with them, but the turbaned East Indians could not explain, making vague flying motions with their hands and obviously frightened.

The situation was further complicated by the vaudeville people, who owned the elephants, walking in and demanding their property.

"Go up and get 'em," said the secretary.

"You fetch 'em down," said the vaudeville people.

There was no fetching them down unless the beasts were dropped down the elevator shafts. Meanwhile bales of hay were lugged in and shot to the sixth floor, where the hungry trumpetings speedily stopped as the visitors got to work.

The newspapers were full of the mystery and the talk of the town was of Goldberg's and the elephants on the sixth floor. The boarded-up window was the mecca of thousands of sight-seers, and as the news got out that the elephants were now on their best behavior and were to give free exhibitions every two hours by special arrangements with their owners, the department store was thronged. People who came to enjoy a free performance found that they could go up on the elevators but must come down by the stairs, thus ac-

quainting themselves with the different Goldberg departments.

A reward was offered for a correct answer to the question, "How did they get up there?" Whole pages were taken in every paper in town setting forth Goldberg bargains which the curious visitors swarming over the establishment grabbed with both hands. The winter spell gave a brisk impetus to the sale of the winter stocks, and extra cashiers had to be taken on to handle the money which rolled in on the fortunate department store with the elephants on the sixth floor. Incidentally business was woefully dull in every other department store in town.

The performing elephants remained for several days when their owners made peremptory demands for their return and threatened suit for damages for stopping the performances. Stocks were low now and there was need for a general overhauling for the spring trade, so one morning the elephants were discovered missing, turning up at a town a hundred miles away to do their regular vaudeville stunt. There were no explanations and the Indian mahouts vaguely waved their arms when questioned as to the flight to earth.

"Mr. Barker, you're a wonder!" said the secretary of the Goldberg department store on the first of April. "We've made more money in the last 15 days than we took in in the two months before, and I don't mind telling you that it has pulled us out of a financial hole. Mr. Goldberg has authorized me to hand you this $500 over and above your salary, and—do you mind giving me the details now—I know I promised not to ask."

"Why, certainly," smiled Mr. Barker, pocketing the money. "You'd never suspect it, but the head mahout is an Irishman and he worked with me and Mr. Delaney to admiration. The mahouts egged on the elephants to heave bricks at the stuffed brother in the window and then to go in and rip him up. We had some ship's slings made of 10-ply canvas, copper riveted and reinforced to the limit. You know these particular elephants were fresh from Europe and they had been slung onto lighters and then into steamships

and off again till slinging was second nature. Delaney had unhooked one elevator cage and fixed a gangway of two-inch planks doubled, and we simply elevated the four of 'em, the mahouts riding up behind their ears and sticking 'em good and plenty with the goads to keep 'em occupied. It was all done quick and without a hitch."

"Bravo!" laughed Mr. Ketcham. "The newspapers are worrying yet as to how it was done."

MIXING THE GRADES.

BY M. W. FOSHAY.

THE son of his employer sat in Mr. Knight's home, where, ever since he was a small boy, he had delighted to come and play with Bessie. He was "Fred" to all the family, and a favorite; but now he was preferring a request that came unpleasantly to Bessie's father. Following his statement, a silence fell between them. It was finally broken by Mr. Knight, who said, in a very decisive way:

"No, Fred, my boy, we're not in the same class, and I don't like to mix the grades," and the keen eye of the foreman looked resolutely, if not unkindly, at the stylishly dressed young man.

"Is that your only reason?" Fred asked, his countenance overcast and his nerves not quite steady, for he well knew the older man's inflexibility when once he had taken a stand. "I shouldn't think——" and he paused, in a slight confusion.

"That I would object mixing them upward, eh?" and Mr. Knight smiled as he completed the other's thought.

"Well, I don't want you to think I look at it that way!" Fred burst out, rising in his excitement. "Only——" and again he hesitated.

"I understand," was the quiet response. "Now, please sit down and let me state the case in a word or two, from my standpoint. You mean to say, that, on the part of the employe, it is generally considered a very complimentary thing when the son of his employer wishes to marry his daughter, and that mixing the grades upward in this fashion ought to be all right so far as I am concerned.

"Well, I'm of a different opinion. While I have no objection to you personally—of course not, for haven't I known you ever since I had to carry you in my arms to keep you out of danger in the factory?"

and he laid his hand affectionately on Fred's shoulder—"but I've seen too many rich men's sons who are no good for anything but managing property. That's all right, too, for property must be looked after; only, what would you do in the battle of life if you hadn't a dollar to manage?"

"But there isn't any danger——"

"Yes there is! There's always danger, and when a young fellow brought up as you are loses his means, he becomes the most helpless and useless man in America. I'm getting a little grizzled, as you see," and he stroked his beard that was fast becoming touched with gray, "and Bessie is the apple of my eye. It is my business to protect her, and when she marries her husband will be an honest mechanic. You are fresh from college and can turn your head to many things, I have no doubt, but what can you turn your hand to? I believe in a college education—all the more because I was deprived of it, and Bessie has two years of it yet before she can think of marriage to anyone—but I believe that with it every man ought to have something he can put his hand to in case of business disaster. You're young. Learn something of this sort, and then come back to me;" and he again put his hand on Fred's shoulder.

The latter sat in perplexed thought. He did not know how to look at the view Mr. Knight presented, it was so different from the ordinary one. He had nothing but money and good character with which to commend himself to Bessie's father!—and he knew that his decision would stand.

ANDERSON'S MISTAKE.

"Well," he said, at last, "I always supposed a young man's first consideration was to possess the means to afford marriage, but it seems that I am mistaken in this case. If I become a competent ditch-digger, will that do?" he asked bitterly.

Mr. Knight made no answer. It really pained him to see the way the young man took it, but he could not recede from his position.

"I tell you what!" Fred suddenly exclaimed, rising, "the time was when men fought to win fair ladies, and Bessie shall be mine if a dozen mechanical dragons have to be overthrown. I suppose there's no objection to my seeing her when she's at home, and writing to her?"

"Lord bless you, no! You've always been welcome to my home ever since you and Bess were tots and went to the public school together, and I hope you always will be."

Fred went to see his father.

"I want to learn the beginnings of this business," he said, "so that I can do anything there is to be done in the whole establishment."

"A very commendable ambition," his father concurred. "Well, I've given you charge of the lowest department in the office and will put you on up as rapidly as you become familiar with the details."

"But that isn't what I mean," Fred explained. "I want to learn the mechanics of the whole affair, so that if anything happens I can do or direct the work."

"You don't mean that you want to go into the factory?" and his father raised his eyebrows incredulously.

"Yes."

"Well, that's an odd idea—and not to be thought of! I don't know exactly what you mean by 'if anything happens,' but it will take all your time to master the commercial side of the business, and I haven't any notion of putting you to wiring houses or polishing telephones."

Fred presented the ideas of Mr. Knight (without, of course, mentioning his name, or making known the real reason for his request) to the best of his ability, and wound up by declaring his intention to learn a trade or its equivalent.

"What's the matter with you, Fred?" his father asked impatiently, at the conclusion. "My business cannot become jeopardized any more than—than the government, or anything else that's as solid as a rock.

You are talking nonsense. I've fitted you to take my place, in time, as head of affairs, and what on earth has got into your mind?"

Then Fred made a clean breast of the situation. His father listened to the passionate recital with the same kind of interest he would have bestowed on a fairy story, and when his son finished he remarked, icily:

NO MIXING OF GRADES.

"Well, I am glad my foreman agrees so thoroughly with my views about 'mixing the grades,' as he calls it, although our standpoints are likely quite different. I certainly shall not consent to mingling the classes in this instance, and much less to the idea of your stepping down to prepare for it. Now, let us have no more of this. You are of age and of course can do as you like, but if you continue to bear any relation to my business it must be on the plane where you belong. If you make a fool of yourself, it shall be neither in the establishment nor at home. I think your department needs your attention now," and he turned to his desk.

Three weeks later Fred was in Chicago at work in an electrical establishment. The parting at home had been bitter. His father said he did not care to hear from him at all, but he wrote to his mother regularly. His intention was to compass electrical engineering, beginning at the workman's end and finishing at a school. For the present he was a helper, begrimed and greasy.

Alert, brainy, competent in every way, he went up the rounds of the ladder rapidly, and at the end of two years he could do with his own hands any part of the work. His longest letters were to Bessie, and in them he disclosed his intention of going to Wisconsin University, where, because of his practical knowledge, he could finish the course in electrical engineering in one year. This was to be a secret, for he did not care to have his father know anything about his movements, and his letters from his mother would continue to be directed to Chicago.

His letters home had been ignored by his father.

At first, he told his wife not to mention Fred at all; but during the last six months she had ventured to tell a few items about his progress, and when she at length informed him that Fred was assistant foreman, he seemed interested. As a matter of fact, he was in trouble and longed for his son's presence and help. Several blocks of stock that he held had gone down, competition was terrific, and he was not so confident of being solid as a rock as he had been a few years previous.

With the passage of another year, matters with him were still more involved. It was going to be necessary to employ the most competent help and use the latest devices in order to hold his own in the business world. Several changes must be made in the construction of his plant, and he determined to secure an up-to-date electrical engineer to effect them and to carry on that part of the work in the most approved fashion.

The president of the university at Madison, Wisconsin, was an old friend, and he wrote to him that if he considered the man graduating at the head of his class this year from the electrical department to be of more than average ability among head men, there was a situation ready for him. The president replied that he mentioned the request to the professor in charge of that department, and he had been assured that they had a very unusual man in the class who had combined practice and theory in his preparation, and he felt satisfied that he would fill the bill.

SECURED THE MAN.

This was so promising and Mr. Anderson was so afraid of losing the chance of securing such a man, that he forwarded a liberal contract for a term of years, signed and finished except the insertion of the young man's name, which had not been mentioned in the correspondence. This could be attended to and he could sign it before the president and then bring the document along with him, in case he accepted the offer.

One day Fred stood unannounced before his father in the office.

"Good morning, father," he said, extending his hand.

"G-good morning," his father returned, grasping the hand and looking in astonishment at his son, stylishly dressed and with no appearance of the workman about him.

Fred saw relief in his father's face, and he was glad his reception had been so cordial. He took a paper from his pocket and passed it over. A glance showed it to be the contract for an electrical engineer, and both signatures were "Frederick Anderson," except that the second one had "Jr." after it.

"W-why, wh-what——" his father began, but Fred quietly cleared it up by saying:

"I've finished my apprenticeship in both practice and theory, and I'm here as the best man the U had to send out—and I'm mighty glad, too, that I'm to help my father!"

The latter turned his face aside.

"I'm needing it badly, in more ways than one," he acknowledged, with a break in his voice.

"Well, I imagine we're a combination that can beat the world," Fred returned, heartily.

A short conversation revealed the business state of affairs, and father and son were soon deep in plans for the reconstruction of the factory. The work was undertaken in a few days and rapidly pushed. When it was half finished, a sympathetic strike called off the workmen. Mr. Anderson was in extreme nervous distress. Every order counted, and now it looked as if nothing could be turned out for a month.

"Don't you worry for a minute!" Fred answered to his father's fears. "I'll get two or three common workmen and put the difficult parts together myself, and we'll be ready to run in a week."

"Can you do the work, as well as tell how it ought to be done?" Mr. Anderson asked, in surprise.

"Yes, sir!" was the emphatic reply. "That's exactly what I've been learning while away from home —to do with my hand what I knew how to do with my head."

Both Fred and Bessie had been unwilling to marry without, not simply the consent but the hearty willingness of their parents, for they had high ideals of the sanctity and permanence of such a union. They believed it to be only the matter of a short time when the way would be cleared, and now Fred welcomed the opportunity to show her father and his own what he could do.

THE RUNNING ARRANGED.

Some of the operatives who could not attend to their work until the new plant was running were secured as assistants, and Fred set up the machinery and made the connections. Mr. Knight had fumed and fretted over the delay in getting out the orders, and he now anxiously watched Fred, but without much confidence in the result. His father, also, came over from the office every hour or two and nervously inspected the operation, although he knew next to nothing about the mechanical part of it. The attitude of these two was enough to drive the son and lover distracted, but Fred smilingly went on with his business. There was more at stake than the adjustment of a few pieces of machinery, and he could not afford to let anything stand in his way!

One week from the time he began, everything was in order. At the moment of its completion Mr. Knight was not present, and Fred sent for his father. Then he turned on the power long enough to see that all worked as it should, and said to his father:

"If you will have all hands here in the morning, I'll show them how it goes and explain a few points."

Mr. Anderson looked at the revolving machinery for a while and listened as Fred told him about some of the important features, and finally he said, abruptly:

"Come over to the office. I want to talk to you."

"Fred," he continued, when they were alone, "I commenced to think as never before about the relationship of hand work to head work when I found, some two years ago, that I was not quite holding my own in business competition. I've thought much more about it since you have put your hand so successfully

to that machinery, and I now see the wisdom of being able to do things one's self, even if never called on actually to perform them. It is a provision of safety. Then, I see another thing—the nobility of the independence that it gives. You were delicately brought up and given a collegiate course, yet since you have taken hold of this work it seems to me that you are more of a man than if you were as helpless as I am at it. I begin to believe that, in America at least, there ought to be no caste except of worthiness and the ability to bring things to pass. Society would then adjust its circles according to the congeniality of its members, and no one barred," and he paused thoughtfully.

"I'm not giving a lecture," he went on, smiling, "but you know that it has always been difficult for me to change my mind, and what I have been saying is only a preparation for telling you what you are far more interested in. Bessie Knight is taking her place by invitation in some of our best circles of society, and she has shown herself to be a sweet and cultivated young lady. You have shown me"—and here his voice took on a tender tone, mingling with a slightly jocular air to cover it—"that you are a level-headed youngster, so that, as far as I am concerned, you have my sanction to do whatever your heart dictates."

Fred had a very fair idea of what it cost his father to reverse the attitude of a lifetime, and said with a fullness of feeling his voice did not hide:

"Thank you, father."

On the following morning, Mr. Knight and those who worked under him gathered round Fred while he explained all that was necessary about the management of the power. Then he started up the whole, and they scattered to their different places of work. Only Mr. Knight was left with him.

"Fred, my boy," he said, laying a hand on his shoulder, according to his custom when his feelings were stirred, "mix the grades as soon as you like!"

THE TRAPPING OF BOMB-PROOF SMITH.

BY EDGAR DAYTON PRICE.

"SEVENTY-SIX judgments! and he's doing business yet," said McElroy, incredulously.

"Flourishing, Tommy," said the narrator, "and finding fresh victims right along—they run after him. His local title is 'Bombproof' Smith, from the fact that he is judgment and execution proof."

"Any new methods?" asked McElroy, who was a young and briefless lawyer, whose income was almost solely derived from making commercial collections. He was alert to keep track of his quarry, their methods of making debts as well as paying them under pressure, and his friend, Harry Wheeler, who sold a line of wheels and hubs, had him very much interested in an extreme case where Harry had joined the ranks of the "stuck."

"Same old methods," laughed the salesman. "He takes advantage of people's overwhelming desire to sell goods, and bilks them right along. He is original in that he keeps his credit sweet in Wortendyke—pays on the nail without solicitation, and the consequence is that everybody helps 'Bombproof' to trap the stranger. There's a lawyer in Wortendyke who is the correspondent of the commercial agencies, and even he, who knows what a scoundrel Smith is, and the mountain of judgments piled up against him, gives the rascal a lift by sending out mild reports. Here's one, on which my firm extended credit to 'Bombproof' to the tune of $250, order taken by your humble servant, number of resultant judgment, 70," said the seller of wheels and hubs, extending the pink tissue to his friend.

" 'Azariah Smith, trading as the Wortendyke Carriage Works,' " read the lawyer. "He trades as the Wortendyke Implement Company and the Center County Buggy Emporium, too," interrupted Wheeler.

"'Azariah Smith, trading as the Wortendyke Carriage Works, is a man of 40, hard-working and industrious, and doing a good business. Failed once and has number of judgments against him. Wife said to have property in her own right. Local credit first-class, but do not recommend him for large risks,' That's fine," said McElroy, handing the slip back, "anybody would take a chance with a man like that."

"My house did. They took 'one risk,' of $250," said Wheeler ruefully, "and pulled out judgment Number 70. They'd cheerfully contribute the whole $250 toward putting Smith in jail where he could stick no more people," he concluded.

"Smith must be making considerable money by this clever arrangement of getting his materials free," said the lawyer thoughtfully. "I wonder where it goes?"

"'Wife said to have property in her own right,'" quoted Wheeler. "Mrs. Smith is pretty flush, I judge, for when I went to Wortendyke on a vain hope of getting the $250, I found her on record as holding mortgages by the dozen on nearby property."

"Just so," said McElroy, "a clever pair in their line. "What sort of a chap is this 'Bombproof,' for looks?"

"Medium height, small features, and shifty eyes that avoid yours. Not much of a talker, for it took me one afternoon and part of the next morning to get him to say 'yes' to my prayer for that confounded $250 order. That's the way he fools all the salesmen—makes them work like horses to get an order."

"What do you suppose those judgments amount to, Harry?" asked the lawyer thoughtfully.

"Between nine and ten thousand dollars, every cent of it," said the salesman.

"I've a notion to take a shy at your friend 'Bombproof' and collect on some of those judgments," said the lawyer.

Harry Wheeler laughed. "Every collection agency, and every lawyer for miles around has tried it, and laid down," he said.

"Well, the saying is that there is a weak spot in every armor," said Thomas McElroy, attorney-at-law. "My business will be to go to Wortendyke and live there until I find the flaw in our friend Smith, and then I'll insert a cold-chisel under his shell and rip his armor off—and make $5,000 on a 50-per cent divvy," he said, falling into a trance in which he saw a certain girl, a vineclad cottage and the accessories of a blissful wedded life—all to spring into activity when the $5,000 came to hand. She was such a dear girl, with such faith in him, and willing to wait—

"Well, if you tackle it, good luck to you," said Wheeler, rising to go. "My firm will donate the whole $250, and if I can be of any service, don't fail to call on me, and—remember me to Ella."

"Yes, yes, I will; thanks, thanks," said the lawyer, coming out of his dream.

The attorney sent for a list of the judgments against Azariah Smith, and communicated with the owners of the same. He had no trouble at all in making his 50 per cent arrangement, and with the preliminaries adjusted, he closed his office, abandoned his practice and took train for the town of Wortendyke.

For reasons of economy, and because it was a sure way of getting close to the neighborhood life, he took board with a Mrs. Higginbottom, with whom he at once became a prime favorite. Thomas could strum a banjo to admiration and sing popular songs by the dozen, and being not at all bashful about his accomplishments, it was not long before he was in the village "swim." The young fellows liked him, and the girls were prepared to, but there he drew the line, and fortified by the letter in feminine writing that came every day, he kept them at a proper distance. He would have made honorable exceptions of the young ladies of the Smith family, and "shined up" a little in that direction, but he never received an invitaion to call or any other indication showing that they were impressed.

"The Smith's is dretful stingy," said Mrs. Higginbottom, noticing this coldness. "Them girls wouldn't

ask a young man to call, for fear he'd stay to a meal's vittles. Mrs. Smith's the stingy one, though—that woman is up four o'clock Monday mornings a-doing the fambly washing, just to save the money to put out on bond and mor'gage, an' she said to be wuth her thousands a'ready!"

Thomas McElroy was a born cross-examiner if there ever was one. As the weeks passed by, he skillfully drew information about Azariah and his wife from dozens of people without their suspecting it. The shifty methods of "Bombproof" in business, and his wife's remarkable prosperity were common property and scarcely worth commenting on, so used was everybody to them. When it came to relationships, it developed that the lawyer who represented the mercantile agencies was a second cousin to Mrs. Smith, which explained some things very well. "Bombproof" and his wife, their descendants and their progenitors were tabulated, and the wily Thomas followed every vein, looking for somebody with money to which Azariah would fall heir, and not finding him.

Several weeks passed while this knowledge was being accumulated, and at the end, the banjo strummer was as far away from his object as at the beginning. The vine-covered cottage, etc., seemed far away, too, but the attorney-at-law was made of bulldog stuff, and having set his teeth in, was not going to let go until he drew blood and brought down his game. His hope was that he could somehow induce Mrs. Smith to transfer her property to her husband, when a lien could be clapped on until the judgments were satisfied. As the weeks went by, this seemed extremely improbable.

An exciting diversion occurred, when news came that an uncle of Azariah's had died up in Michigan, and left Azariah his sole heir. The owner of the Wortendyke Carriage Works, etc., etc., had a rather dim remembrance of his Uncle William, who had gone off years before and bothered those behind very little in the way of correspondence.

"Bombproof" went around town wearing an aspect of keen sorrow while he was waiting for the particu-

lars of the will to come by mail, and his vigilant watcher, finding that by a lucky coincidence Harry Wheeler was in Michigan, besought that gentleman to investigate the estate of the deceased and report.

The two reports came in about the same time. Azariah's grief departed like a morning mist when he found that he was heir to a visionary.

"I don't believe he'd have gone to the trouble of a will just to leave me nothing at all," he said sourly to his better half. "Just as like's not, the plaguey lawyers up there in Michigan is combinin' to defraud and persecute me, the same way's they do around here. I've a notion to go to Michigan and see them people——"

"No, you won't," said Mrs. Smith. "The idea, spending a lot of good money traipsing up there. What you want to do is to write to the court that probates the wills, and demand a copy. Seems to me, I remember something about Uncle William being connected with a bank, or having shares, or something—anyhow, you write."

Harry Wheeler duly investigated the estate of Uncle William on his friend Thomas's account, and his report jumped remarkably with Mrs. Smith's memory.

"The old fellow was a director of a bank here, years ago," wrote Harry. "He owned a big block of its stock and was considered well-to-do, but"—the rest of the letter sent the attorney into a brown study, while he absently contemplated the name of a Michigan lawyer Harry recommended in case he thought it worth while to take legal action there. The brown study suddenly cleared away, for a most amazing plan had broken in upon the lawyer's mind.

"Eureka! Eureka! I've got him, I've got him!" he exclaimed, and seizing his faithful banjo he swept the strings and executed an Indian dance to his own music.

"Simplicity itself," he chuckled. "I've found the weak point in the Smith armor, and it's avarice; I've found in dear Uncle William the instrument of 'Bombproof's' undoing, and now watch events march,

with a finale of the long green in these hungry hands, and then—

'The wedding bells, the wedding bells,
List to their blissful chime,'"

he murmured, his thoughts flying to the sweet little girl at home.

"Forward! now to set in motion the last act of the drama and trap the erstwhile bombproof one," he commanded, shaking himself. "Every step well considered, the plan's as logical as a problem in chess, three moves, and—check!"

"Bombproof" was right in his estimate of his Uncle William. Another Michigan lawyer wrote him that the deceased had left $100,000 in bank shares, to which Azariah Smith was sole legatee. There was not the slightest cloud to his title, the will had been probated and the court had ordered that the bank stock, as the sole asset, should be expressed to the heir. In accordance with the command, the stock had been sent with every precaution, and should arrive in two or three days.

To say that this news excited the worthy couple is to put it mildly. They could not eat or sleep, so afraid were they that that precious bundle would go astray, or that a whisper of their good fortune should get among their creditors, whom they firmly intended never to pay. A rumor of the event ran about the town, and the couple denied it with such vigor that everyone believed it. When the package, red with tape and heavy with seals, came in, there was quite a company to witness "Bombproof" and his wife receive it. Deathly pale and trembling, Azariah stretched out his hand to receive the $100,000, when the cup of joy was rudely snatched from his lips, for a young man stepped forward and handed the expressman a legal document.

"I have filed a lien on this package," he said, "until judgments amounting to $10,562 and costs, against this man Azariah Smith, are paid to me as trustee for the creditors—here's my authority," and he flashed

another legal document with many signatures beneath the nose of "Bombproof."

Azariah burst into tears.

"You give me that package, Abe Short," he said to the expressman between sobs. "It's mine, and I'm a-going to have it!"

"No, you don't, 'Riah," said the wary man, clapping the precious bundle into the safe. "A court order's a court order, and if you don't feel like paying the debts you've been skinning folks out of all these years, I'll jest turn the bank stock over to the jedge, and let him keep it till you change your mind."

"Come home, Azariah," said Mrs. Smith, keenly conscious of the grinning faces around her. "I don't believe that there's any bank stock in the bundle at all—it's just a scheme to ruin us. Come home, anyhow, out of the sight of this sneak, this snake in the grass, who's been laying around town all this summer a-playing a banjer, and watching his chance to devour us."

"Thank you," said the snake, bowing elaborately. "I happen to know that there are shares of bank stock in that package, in your dead uncle's name, to the value of $100,000. If you do not quickly adjust this little claim of mine," he flourished the long list of judgments, "we'll all get into court together, and—we'll see."

"Come, Azariah," said the lady, elbowing her way through the crowd.

For a short moment, Thomas McElroy, attorney-at-law, was discomfited, but he caught a glimpse of something in Mrs. Smith's face which reassured him. The crowd departed, but the attorney lingered.

"It's against the law," he said to the expressman, winking, "but—if anybody with a hunger to know the contents of that package should ask to take a little peep—why, there's no harm in letting them."

"All right, Mr. McElroy," said the versatile Abe, grinning. "I almost thought myself, that that was a fake package and that you was putting up a bluff, filing a lien on it."

"No, sir!" said the lawyer emphatically, "there's no bluff."

An odd scene was enacted in the express office that night, when, behind closed doors and curtained windows, the protesting Abe brought forth the sealed package, and with infinite care, Azariah and his wife lifted the seals and opened one end of it. There they were, one hundred engraved sheets, each compactly folded and indorsed—nobody in the world could imitate the expensive engraving, or the trembling indorsement of Uncle Wiliam on each one. Convinced, they stole away, and the expressman made an artistic job in restoring the violated package to its original condition.

Mrs. Smith made a hurried journey to the county seat the next day, and did a vast deal of business with banks and other financial institutions. When she came back, she sent for Mr. Thomas McElroy and with averted face, drew check after check, each for the amount of a judgment with interest, for which Mr. McElroy promptly signed releases and acknowledgments of payment, which would permit of expunging the judgments from the records. When all was paid, the lady, holding her skirts back in disdain, opened the door, and mentioned the single word, "Get!"

"With pleasure, and many thanks for your kindness in rehabilitating my clients in that which your good husband stripped them of," said Mr. McElroy, and departed for home on the next train.

The thing leaked out, as those things will.

"Hear how 'Bombproof' was trapped?" was the question propounded in Wortendyke. "No? Why, them bank shares that come by express that the missus put up the dough to get out of limbo—let me laugh—was—oh, yes, they was bank shares all right—but—they was shares of a bank that had been busted for 20 years!"

And the chastened "Bombproof," his armor pierced, never made a peep.

STOVER, THE RESOURCEFUL

BY LINCOLN M. STEARNS.

SIMEON ABBOTT, cabinet maker, when a young man, had come to Westopolis from New England. Big of frame, a hard worker, with considerable mechanical ingenuity, and a man of his word even in small things, he soon had a shop of his own in the growing city; and when in the west there arose a demand for better school appointments, he saw the opportunity and formed the Abbott School Desk Company. The company built good desks, employed resourceful salesmen, cheerfully allowed heavy expense accounts, charged ample prices, and as a result Mr. Abbott made a comfortable fortune, considering time and place. The active management of the company he then turned over to his sons, who had grown up in the business, and for some months Mr. Abbott lived at leisure. But 30 years of activity had unfitted him for idleness, and not wishing to resume the headship of the desk business, he sought other occupation. I do not know what turned his thought towards banking; perhaps it was the desk company's heavy interest payments in earlier days, when large bank accommodations were needed to enable it to take contracts payable in scrip. At any rate, the "Old Man," as he was familiarly called (though not to his face) bought enough State Bank stock to give him a seat in its directory and became such a factor in the bank's increasing success that in a few years he was chosen president of the institution.

For some time I had been a stenographer for the desk company and had written Mr. Abbott's personal letters. His dictations were crisp to brusqueness, of a piece with his straightforward dealing, and he would often say to me, "Now, you tone that down a little. You know how to put it so it won't sound too strong." I must have suited him, for when he became president

of the State Bank he took me with him as his private secretary.

At that time the bank had outgrown its quarters and was erecting a new building. The fixtures were to include a burglar proof steel vault, on which several manufacturers were asked to submit estimates. The Climax Safe Company, however, was not invited to compete, although it had an agent in Westopolis. When this man learned that his company had been ignored, he came to see Mr. Abbott, but the Old Man gave him scant comfort. "We want a first-class job," said the Old Man, "and I understand that your people have not built any large work of this kind. We cannot afford to take any chances." The agent's attempts to argue or explain were useless. The Old Man only said: "You'll have to excuse me. I am very busy."

A few days later I was called from the private office to meet a stranger who introduced himself as John Stover, sales manager for the Climax Safe Company. In those days I was the Old Man's buffer, and it fell to me to separate the sheep from the goats, by suavely explaining to the latter that Mr. Abbott was just then engaged on matters of urgency, and referring them to the cashier, or by some other equally polite evasion. But Stover was so pleasantly insistent that I saw time would be saved by yielding, and led him into the private office.

"Well, sir!" demanded the Old Man, when I had introduced Stover and mentioned the Climax Safe Company.

"I have called, Mr. Abbott," said Stover, "to see you in regard to your steel vault."

"I told your agent that we did not want a bid from your company," snapped the Old Man, and turned to his desk as if ending the interview.

But Stover held his ground. He took a deep breath, and the muscles at the base of his jaw showed lumpy. His black eyes opened a little wider, and he flushed a trifle. I looked for an explosion, for Stover seemed to be a man who would not submit to rough handling;

but when he spoke his voice was smooth and even, not loud, but with a repressed sonorousness that I have remarked in men speaking under excitement, but who were still self-controlled. The Old Man had to listen when he heard that tone.

Said Stover: "Mr. Abbott, I am here because our local man seems unable to secure consideration. I am sure there is some misunderstanding, and that you do not intend to discredit a reputable house. From what our agent tells me, I judge that you have been misinformed as to what we are able to do. It is true that we have not yet built any very large burglar vaults, but as a matter of fact we have made a closer study of burglar construction than anyone else in the business. We have moved slowly in this branch of the work, but we are today prepared to execute the largest contracts, and I can demonstrate this if you will give me a hearing. You seem to be busy just now, and I shall be glad to call again at any time that you may name; but I think you will agree with me that it is no more than business courtesy that we should at least be heard. You have had men on the road, and if any of them had been refused even a chance to bid, on the ground that the Abbott Desk Company was incompetent, I am sure the first train would have taken you to the spot, and that—you—would—have—secured—consideration."

During this rather long speech the Old Man's face was a study. Like all men of strong character, his temper was likewise, and it often needed an effort for him to check it in the face of decided opposition, though he was fair and just when given time to reflect. When Stover began the Old Man had wheeled to face him, and several times seemed about to interrupt. But Stover had kept on, measuring his words, but never halting, and with that something in his voice which intimated that he, too, was a man of temper; and by the time he had finished the Old Man was listening without impatience, and a grim half smile flickered over his face at the implied tribute of Stover's last words. Nevertheless, it was not the Old

Man's way to instantly admit a mistake. I remember one clerk who got a nice raise in salary a few days after the Old Man had unjustly censured him, but it was not of record that Mr. Abbott made other acknowledgment of his error. So all that the Old Man said now, was "Well, come in tomorrow morning and we'll see."

When Stover came the next day Mr. Abbott was quite polite, but to me who knew him there was in his manner that which said: "It's my turn today." After a few words had been exchanged, he suddenly asked Stover, as if to take him unaware: "How thick should a steel vault be to be absolutely safe?" A simple question. Too simple. Stover had claimed that his company knew more about steel vault construction than its competitors, and his answer would probably settle the Old Man's opinion of that sweeping claim. I am sure Stover grasped this, but without any apparent hesitation, he unconcernedly smiled back, "Two and a half inches."

"What!" jerked the Old Man, "two and a half inches?"

"Yes."

A second's silence, and then from the Old Man: "Isn't one inch and a half safe?"

"It is considered safe by some, but you asked me how thick it should be to be absolutely safe, and I say two and a half inches. Now we all know that an inch and a half has been the standard thickness, and if everyone in the vault business and every banker knows this, isn't it fair to assume that it is also known to the average cracksman? He naturally prepares his tools and arranges his time to go through a wall one and a half inches thick. But if it is an inch thicker he finds himself at fault. He probably has not allowed enough time. He gets rattled and gives it up. That is why I say that two and a half inches is absolutely safe."

The Old Man was much impressed. Stover had established himself, and at the same time had shaken Mr. Abbott's confidence in the other competitors, for

they all had recommended one and one-half inch walls, which Stover had shrewdly assumed. The talk that followed is not part of this tale. Suffice it to say that Mr. Abbott sent word to all bidders that he wanted proposals on two and one-half inch walls, and in racing parlance it was now "Stover against the field, with odds on Stover."

The bids were opened at a session of the directors. After listening for a half hour to the reading of technical explanations, they unanimously voted to let Mr. Abbott award the contract.

For several days the Old Man studied specifications, looked over drawings, examined samples, mastered the mechanism of locking apparatus, and listened while six bright salesmen in turn explained just why his proposal was the best. It was the hardest work the Old Man had done for a long time. Stover's turn came last of all, at his request. We went to the Palace hotel to see his samples, but he did not weary the Old Man with shop talk. He said: "There are my samples. What you don't know about vault work by this time isn't worth knowing, and you can judge for yourself." And then for nearly two hours Stover told us good stories, with a few words of business sandwiched in. It rested the Old Man, and confirmed his opinion that the Climax Company had the best goods.

Mr. Abbott, however, was slow in deciding. It was plain to see that he wanted to give Stover the order, but the Climax bid was the highest of all by quite a sum, and the Old Man spent other people's money carefully. Finally he told all bidders that he would announce his decision the following Saturday.

On Friday something happened. With no reason except unreasoning fear and panic, if they can be called a reason, a "run" began on the State Bank. The institution was sound; its loans conservative. But all day Friday our paying tellers shoved cash through the wickets, while the line in the lobby grew steadily longer, and gradually changed to a pushing, jostling crowd, covering the sidewalk as well, and requiring several policemen to maintain order. We paid out

large sums that day, but at closing time the throng was no smaller. In vain had the Old Man, our cashier, and several of the directors mingled with the crowd, buttonholing large depositors and giving personal assurances of the bank's strength. Nor did it avail that we hung in prominent places within and without the building placards stating unequivocally that the bank was able to pay dollar for dollar. Some of the heavier depositors frankly said that they believed the bank was sound, but that no bank could withstand such a run, and that they would withdraw while they could. In a measure they were right, for no bank can instantly pay all depositors. Banks live by their loans, and how many borrowers can pay on demand?

We wired our New York and Chicago correspondents to express us our balance in currency. The shipment from New York could not reach Westopolis until Sunday, but that from Chicago would come in time to fortify us for Saturday. The other Westopolis banks would have gladly advanced us some cash, but feared to weaken themselves at a time when they might need all their resources. Such was the friendship of some of our business men for the Old Man, however, that several of them who owed us money not yet due voluntarily anticipated payment of all or part. "Things like this," said the Old Man, "keep up my faith in human nature."

On Saturday the run continued, and by ten o'clock the outlook was desperate. We closed at twelve on Saturdays, and could last the day, but the end would come Monday unless the run abated.

The Old Man chewed an unlit cigar and paced the private office. While walking the floor he dictated to me a notice to be printed in the Westopolis Evening Post. The peril of the bank had caused us to forget that this was the day on which the vault contract was to be awarded, and none of the vault salesmen had come to remind us of it. But as I was typewriting the notice which the Old Man had just dictated, Stover entered. Mr. Abbott greeted him cordially, but said: "You see there is no use talking vaults today, Mr.

Stover. It doesn't look as if we would ever need one. I guess the other vault men feel that way, for none of them have been near us since the run began, and I guess you are not hankering after the order yourself." Stover replied: "Will you give me the order?" The Old Man appeared surprised at this question, and also pleased, but shook his head. "I don't know that I could give you the order even if we buy. You are the highest bidder by nearly 10 per cent. But if you were the lowest bidder, it wouldn't make much difference. To show you how things stand I want Fred here to read you what I have just dictated." And I read:

"To the Depositors of the State Bank: As a proof of my confidence in the absolute soundness of the State Bank, I hereby publicly pledge my personal fortune to each and every depositor as a guaranty that every dollar owed by this bank will be paid in full."

(Signed) . SIMEON ABBOTT.

"When I have to do this," continued the Old Man, "you can see that things are—well, uncertain. I hope we shall pull through. If people will calm down and get a little sense between now and Monday we shall be all right. But if not—" and the Old Man dropped into his chair and was silent.

Stover reflected a few seconds, drew a chair to the desk, seized a pad and wrote rapidly. When he had finished writing he asked: "Do you ever play cards, Mr. Abbott?" and then went on without waiting for a reply from the astonished Deacon Abbott. "The best card in the deck, you know, is the joker. It beats any trump. Your card for the Post is certainly a trump, and it ought to win. But while you're doing it, why not play the joker? Suppose you also put this in the Post, as a news item." And Stover read:

"We learn that the State Bank this morning ordered the steel burglar proof vault for its new building. It will be the largest and finest west of Chicago, and will be installed by the Climax Safe Company, of Toledo, Ohio, at a cost of over $12,000. It is said that the Climax Company's price was the highest, but the

bank intends to have the best equipment that can be bought."

The Old Man seized Stover's hand (for the Old Man was never accused of being slow of comprehension) and said: "I guess that is the joker." Then, turning to me, "Fred, you take this down to the Post with the other notice."

Six months later we held a reception on our first day in the new building, and Stover was there, by the Old Man's special request, to explain to visitors the wonders of the burglar-proof vault—"the best west of Chicago."

THE BEST POLICY AFTER ALL.

BY W. W. WOODBRIDGE.

THE door closed softly. It was some minutes before the man at the desk looked up from the pile of letters he held.

"Clif!" he exclaimed. "You here?"

The other, a youth of eighteen, stood silently before him, one hand still on the knob of the door. His lips trembled and tears shone bright in his eyes. They were brothers.

"I'm discharged," sobbed the youth, sinking into a chair, crossing his arms on the stenographer's slide and sobbing like a child. The expression in the deep gray eyes of the man at the desk grew tender, and he gently placed his arm over the shaking shoulders of his younger brother.

"Come," he said. "Tell me about it."

"There's not much to tell," sobbed the other. "My first month would have been up tomorrow, and I—" His sobs interrupted him. After a time he continued.

"It was like this. There was a man that kept calling round, and the boss got tired of his coming, and told me to tell him next time he came that he was out. I can't lie, Bob, I couldn't be a liar; so when the man dropped in next time, I just said the boss couldn't see him. When he asked me why, I stammered out something, and then he walked right into the inner office unannounced. The boss blew me sky high when he got at me after the man had gone, and I told him straight out why I hadn't told the lie—because I couldn't. He got red in the face and told me that a fool knew more about business than I did, and that a fool would make a better business man, and then I lost grip on myself and said a fool would were the fool a liar. With that, he flew up and said he wasn't used to being called a liar by a snivelling little upstart fresh

from Sunday school, and sent for the bookkeeper and paid me off, and——"

The man reached down into a lower drawer in his desk, selected a cigar, lighted it and sat for some moments in silence, watching the rings of smoke drift up towards the ceiling.

"Well," he said finally, "you did strike a hard row of stumps for a beginner." He laid his cigar down and leaned back in the great leather chair. "Your beginning and mine were pretty different. I wasn't loaded down with morals when I started in, but acquired them with old age. I'll never forget my first job. I knew just about as much about work as you do about dishonesty. I was good and green from college, and college can give a man about as thick a coat of verdancy as any place I know of, anyway, if he expects to rub up against the money prop. My idea of getting a job was to have plenty of letters of recommendation, so I got enough to bury me. The faculty gave me one, our family doctor and all of father's friends. I found that they were about as easy to catch as the measles and very nearly as useful. You can no no more tell a man's character by the letters he presents than you can tell the character of a cheap restaurant dinner by the menu chalked up on the board in front.

"Well, when I found there was a vacancy in the office of a concern that my father had had some dealings with, I went to 'apply.' I trembled as I sat there in the private office, and began to realize that it's not as easy as it looks to dinkey a man into giving you the place. The man was 'self-made,' with the brand yelling at you. I was supposed to be a stenographer, as I had taken a correspondence course—minus the study. There's no better way to learn stenography than to take one of these courses if you'll buckle down and make good, but I wasn't this kind. I had the theory down to a fine edge, but had no more practice than an eight-months' lawyer.

"I was sitting across the desk from the man about like you are now, and the questions he put to me would

make a civil service examination look simple. I answered as best I could, and what I didn't know, I guessed at—and I don't believe he knew the difference. I informed him what a great thing I was, and how I'd mastered the curves and tiny circles quicker than any man on record. I told him of the smooth flowing hand I wrote, and how I was this, and wasn't that and wouldn't be the other, but——! He began to be impressed and told me the salary was small to begin with, but at this I just shrugged my shoulders and told him the salary was nothing to me; I just wanted to show him what I could do. He said that was the proper kind of talk for him, and that he would expect great things from me. Then I knew I had hooked my fish, but after the hook is well in, the trouble comes in landing. He asked me what machine I used, and I think I said McCormick's. He said he'd never heard of it, and wanted to know about the keyboard. I said it was rather peculiar, but I could soon get on to his. I'd never touched a typewriter in my life! The confab ended with an invite to call around Monday prepared for work.

"I turned up bright and early first of the week, and brought along a five-cent note-book and pencil. I remember the bookkeeper nudged the office-boy and they laughed as I took my seat before the machine and carefully lifted the carriage. I ticked the type up and down once or twice, and then had to ask how to put the paper in. That bookkeeper was my salvation! He is down in my list of saints. I've also got him hired in the office outside. I know a good man when I see him, and that bookkeeper is one of the best. He sat there for an hour and taught me all about the running gear of the machine, the cleaning, and gave me a general idea as to fingering. When I took my seat again, I was well aware that there were some things that I still had to learn. When the boss bolted through to his little den, I was just able to knock off 'Yours truly' correctly, and was proud that I could do it so soon. I must have written twenty pages of 'Yours trulys,' and the boss spoke of how well I was getting onto the

combination of the new machine. This was my first compliment, and I blush to say I took it
A customer came to smile
on me—and I had two hours more to play with the machine. Finally the buzzer rang me up, and he gave me a list of about five hundred envelopes to address. As you know, I write a fist like a mackerel and the pen I had to use sent a splutter of blots before it as I pushed it across the page. The bookkeeper was at dinner, and I didn't know where to find a new one. I wish I had one of those envelopes to show you now. The boss passed through the office after I had about fifty addressed and stopped to look over my shoulder. I heard him whistle softly, and then looked on, saying not a word while I addressed about fifteen. He said he wished he had time to stay longer and watch me do it, but would doubtless have time to do so later. Then he reached over my shoulder and tore up the whole lot I'd addressed, and kindly suggested the typewriter as being an easier way of doing it. The bookkeeper returned and found me nearly in despair, and again he rescued me. I read off the names and he addressed, and when the boss returned, there was a neat pile on his desk, and he spoke of how quickly I had done the work, and how neatly, and I—lied without saying a word.

"Well, that was my last lie, the very last! At nights I was studying, really studying on that course in shorthand, wrong. The lies I had told the boss on that first day were held up before me with every look he gave me. I found he was making inquiry for another man, and all hope left me. Just before the beginning of the next month, and I was sure to lose out then, the boss was suddenly and seriously taken ill, and I had to stay it out for another month. There was nothing much doing in the office for myself or the bookkeeper, so he set in to help a drowning man, and I learned things. By the time the boss got back, I was able to write a fairly decent letter, but lie—I'd have died before I'd told one. When my friends asked me was I secretary or just stenographer, I told them I

was an incompetent office-boy, and didn't even lay claim to filing clerk.

"So this is the way I found the policy of honesty—aside from the question of right and wrong—was well worth the while. I don't think—in fact I know I haven't told a lie since, and it pays most certainly. So just stick to it, kid, and you'll come through all right. There may be some men who want a dishonest man in their office, but those men find that it's no cinch to keep one eye on the correspondence and the other eye on the money drawer. There is not time for both. Be honest, and you command the respect of every one, but——"

He paused and puffed some moments in silence.

"It was a hard lesson for you, but I'm glad you were discharged. It's opened your eyes to some things, and it'll help you in business. And it shows what's in you, too. Now, I've still got that vacancy I told you about just after you took your last job. It's not much to begin with, but if you're half the man I think you and half the man you've shown yourself to be, we may be able to raise the salary a trifle before the century grows too old. Go on, now, stick at it, and remember that I'm bossing this joint and you're special clerk in the honesty department."

He turned again to the pile of letters before him.

HOW JACK CLOSED THE DEAL.

BY EDGAR D. PRICE.

THE office of the Stockwood Lumber Company was fairly buzzing. The specifications for a year's supply of sawed stuff to go into the construction of an enormous number of freight and passenger cars for the N. M. & K. railroad, had come in by the late mail with a "hurry up" request attached, and Mr. Goodsell, the manager, had caused the clerks to drop their work and, splitting up the specifications, set them to figuring and checking.

The Stockwood company had never caught the N. M. & K.'s yearly contract, although they had figured close to the point where the profits were slim and conjectural several times. They were prepared, too, to furnish clear stuff and make prompt deliveries, but with everything pointing to their winning out, a rival concern in Lakeport had steadily got the business.

Mr. Goodsell had about made up his mind that it was a case of "pull," and that the Lakeport Planing Company was "greasing" somebody in the railroad offices, but he was game and determined to give the Lakeport folks a run for their money just the same.

A telegram from the N. M. & K.'s purchasing agent, punching them up to turn in their figure, rather roused Mr. Goodsell's ire.

"I see plainly how it is, Jack," he said to his private secretary, "that skunk Partridge has given the Lakeport people plenty of time and has their figure worked out at their leisure. Our bid and others is 'rushed,' thus multiplying the chance of mistakes and preventing us figuring to a fine point, and then the business is given year after year to our rival."

"It does look so," said the secretary.

"Well," said the manager, "hold the boys until the bid is worked out and checked, and then telegraph

the amount to Partridge and go through the farce of mailing the bill of particulars at your leisure."

"Pardon me, Mr. Goodsell," said the secretary, who had not been with the Stockwood people long, "but would it not be better for some one to run up to Chicago and attend to the matter personally?"

"No, it wouldn't," said the manager sharply, with certain sore recollections. "Twice I took the bid in myself and was permitted to cool my heels in an anteroom for an hour or two and was then told that Partridge was gone for the day, or some such excuse, and I could leave my bid with the clerk."

"That was hardly polite," admitted the secretary. "I think had I took the bid in and waited around that way I should have forced myself on the mighty Partridge, willy-nilly, and taken him jolly good to task for his manners!"

"You think you would?" sneered the manager, vexed at this criticism by his secretary. He looked the young man over. Jack Forbes was 22, with a mild blue eye and a rather sleepy air, and until that moment had never showed any indications of belligerency in his character.

"Your ideas of railroad purchasing agents are 'way off," said the manager, more mildly. "They are mighty people, who must be waited on and kow-towed to; they are buried in whole suites of offices, and it is as much as your life is worth to venture in unannounced, and any 'freshness' loses you your chance at the business."

"Your forbearance never got it for you," said the secretary.

"You impudent——" Burning words were at the end of the irritated manager's tongue at this unexpected and wholly unwarranted criticism from his subordinate. Then a sudden thought prevailed.

"Young man," he said, "I am going to give you a chance to ventilate your notions of the correct and proper handling of purchasing agents and the securing of contracts. You have barely time to get the night express if the boys get those specifications figured by

eight o'clock, and you will get to Chicago by eleven o'clock tomorrow morning. See Partridge—in your can-opener style—and hand him the bid personally, or don't come back."

"All right," said Jack, with a snap of the lips, "I'll do it!"

The secretary slept tranquilly during the long night ride, and in the morning he made an elaborate toilet and partook of a satisfying breakfast. He made up his mind not to tackle the great Partridge until after luncheon, on the theory that men are more affable when they are stuffed, and, accordingly, it was after two o'clock when he walked into the offices of the N. M. & K. railroad.

"Huh! at last," snuffed the clerk to whom he presented his card. "You'll have to wait your turn, Mr. —er—Forbes, for Mr. Collins of the Lakeport company is with Mr. Partridge now." This last with a grin of much meaning.

Jack, unruffled, sat down in the anteroom and waited—five minutes. A familiar sound from the inner office kept drumming in his ears—biff! biff! biff! Truly an odd noise to be coming from the busy office of a purchasing agent of a great railroad. Calmly and without haste, Jack got up and deliberately opened the gate of the railed inclosure full of clerks, walked to the door of the P. A.'s private room and, opening it, entered.

"I punch the bag some myself," he remarked, as he closed the door.

The scene was a singular one. The great man and his visitor were stripped to the shirt and hammering by turns a first-class punching bag. Around the room were all sorts of athletic appliances—a perfect gymnasium in miniature. Jack had found out the great man's foible—athletics.

"Well, I'll be——," gasped the purchasing agent, aghast at this unwarranted invasion, "what's the matter with that bunch of clerks that I can't be protected from intrusion?"

"They didn't have time to stop me, and if they had

tried I would have punched them," said the blue-eyed Forbes.

"Hey—what? I like your nerve, young man; what do you want with me?"

"I want to give you the Stockwood's figures for your sawed stuff for a year, per specifications," said Jack.

"I protest," said Collins of the Lakeport company, speaking for the first time. "Mr. Partridge is engaged with me, and——"

"Ha, ha, ha! Here's a funny thing, Collins. Your bid and the Stockwood's tie to a dollar," said the purchasing agent, who had rapidly run over the specifications handed him by Jack. "Say, boy, you say you can punch the bag, suppose you peel and give us a taste of your skill." Collins was alarmed; a handy man at athletics himself, he had several years ago ingratiated himself with Partridge on this score, and had actually swung the yearly contract to his company on the strength of it. On such small pins may great matters hang.

Without more ado, Jack stripped to his undershirt and put himself under the frame. He was an artist at the punching bag, and with his sleepy air all gone he proceeded to do a stunt that made the admirer of athletics cry, "Bravo!" while Collins, plainly growing angry, could not conceal his chagrin.

A notion entered the purchasing agent's head that gave him enormous delight.

"Collins, old fellow," he cried, "I'm going to put that contract up as a purse for you two fellows to box for, and the best man shall have it. What do you say?"

The angry Collins looked his adversary over and promptly decided to go in. Forbes was a lighter man than himself, and while spry at bag punching—well, boxing was another matter.

"I'll go you," he said.

Two pairs of "mitts" were taken down from the wall and the great man helped the combatants put

them on, and, backing away into a corner, called, "Time!"

Space will not afford a minute account of the battle royal. Jack Forbes say before him the triumph of his life, and Collins perceived his possible undoing before they had been at it two minutes. Biff! Punch! Thump! And then a lot of "infighting," while the purchasing agent danced around them, first commending one and then the other.

"Bang!' A blow from Forbes's glove sent Collins against the door to the outer office, which swung open unheeded.

Biff! came back a crack that swung Jack into the form of the purchasing agent. Silently the wondering clerks gathered about the open door, while the two contestants ducked and pummeled, their hoarse breathing telling of their fast-going powers. Suddenly Jack cut loose in one last mighty effort and landed a blow under Collins' chin as that person came one heavily on Jack's ear. Both went to the floor, and the purchasing agent began to count in true prize-ring style. Jack, with two ghastly black eyes, wobbled to his feet, but Collins lay still. Jack had won!

" 'Rah! 'rah! Whoop! Good for the little 'un! Bravo!" came from the excited clerks crowding the doorway, and Mr. Partridge, noticing them for the first time, pulled himself together and in his most severe manner ordered them back to work.

"Jackson," he added to the head clerk, "you will please make out the lumber contract in the name of the Stockwood company and bring it in to me to sign, and—Jackson, send the janitor in with some warm water."

* * * * * *

"I guess I've lost my secretary," said Mr. Goodsell to himself, as the second day went by with no signs of life from Forbes. "I'm sorry, too, for he is as smart as a whip, if a trifle fresh——. I should not have lost my temper and given him that ultimatum." The manager's attention was attracted by a limping figure coming down the street from the depot.

"Hello! That looks like him coming now, but what's the matter with him? Heavens, what a face!" as Jack turned a swollen countenance toward him adorned with the above-mentioned black eyes.

"Here's your year's contract, Mr. Goodsell; I had to lick Collins, the Lakeport man, to get it," said Jack, cheerfully.

"The devil you did!" said the astounded Goodsell.

THE STICKER.

BY EDGAR DAYTON PRICE.

"HEIGH-HO!" yawned Charley Peterson, sitting up on his high stool in the office of the Brilliant Varnish Works and stretching his cramped arms.

"This is tough," he sighed, addressing nobody in particular. "A tall young man like me, made for the out-of-doors and hustle a-plenty, condemned to sit on a high stool and make out unending bills for varnish."

"There are hundreds of young fellows who would jump for that high stool of yours if it should chance to become vacant," said the book-keeper, eyeing the young fellow severely over his spectacles.

"It's all right—any excuse for getting a start with the Brilliant," said Charlie hastily. "I suppose you've got to creep before you can walk, but my burning ambition is to get out and sell varnish—lots of it. Say, Mr. Goodsell," coaxingly, "I've been here three months and I'm saturated with Brilliant varnish. I've got Brilliant varnish on my trousers and Brilliant varnish in my hair, and I've even eaten a little Brilliant varnish—can't you speak a good word for me and have me sent on the road on trial?"

The book-keeper sighed.

"Ever sell anything?" he asked.

"No-o, I haven't," admitted Charlie. "But I know—"

"They all know," said the book-keeper. "I have seen dozens of men start out to sell varnish, firmly convinced that they had it in them to dazzle the trade and gobble the orders, but when they found themselves up against the men from about a hundred competing houses, just as good as the Brilliant, they soon lost heart, began to sag, and then—off went their heads."

"You talk as if varnish salesmen were born and not made," said Charlie doubtingly.

"There's something born in them that makes them salesmen," admitted Goodsell, "and that is—grit. The

varnish business is peculiar; you can get a working knowledge of it in a month sufficient to start out on the road, but unless you've got never-dying grit, you may know your goods, be affable and all that, but you'll fail."

"I've played football," said Charlie.

"You don't go at folks that way," laughed the book-keeper, "you just stick till you make your sale. Talking about stickers, I recommend Mr. Flint, our president, as a pattern—he's the best salesman in the business."

"He certainly gets fine contracts," said Charlie, who saw the shipments on the president's contracts and handsomely billed them. "I've never seen Mr. Flint; where is he now?"

"On his vacation, I guess," said the book-keeper; "we don't see much of him around here—he's one of your kind, made for out-of-doors." The subject was dropped and the tall invoice clerk turned to his task somewhat enlightened.

"I can stick some—if I'm teased," he muttered.

There were opportunities for selling varnish and making fat contracts in the Brilliant office, and Mr. Goodsell, the book-keeper, was an able office salesman. Many of the customers of the house had the old-fashioned habit of journeying to the works to make their dickers, expecting and never failing to be taken around and shown the varnish in the making, and—what was more gratifying—enjoying a first class time at the expense of the Brilliant people. Occasionally strangers came in, and their method of treatment had to be modified. Once Goodsell knew the stranger's house, its size and varnish-buying ability, its mercantile standing and its reputation for paying, he hooked to the stranger, talked grades and prices, brought forth samples by the dozen and did business on its merits until he landed his fish. Every visitor was handled according to his peculiarities, and there was only one unvarying rule—not to let him escape without buying. A record was kept of every man who came in on a varnish quest, and there had to be explanations to

Mr. Flint if a good possible customer slipped away. When a representative of some concern which had formerly bought Brilliant varnish but had gone over to a competitor came in, things whirled until the man renewed his allegiance to Brilliant, and time and money were nothing.

The tall young man making out bills looked at all this with sharp eyes and listened with long ears. In his career of a few months he saw plenty of examples of "grit" and "stick," for Goodsell had been a heaven-born salesman himself until sickness had incapacitated him for the road. In his noon hours and other moments of leisure, Charlie fiddled around outside in the works, poking his nose into huge kettles and asking endless questions of grimy varnish boilers and mixers, with all of whom he was a prime favorite. The chemists liked Charlie and guided him in making practical tests of varnish at his boarding house, much to the landlady's discomfort, who occasionally acquired an unwished-for gloss, from messes of varnish left carelessly around.

"Oh, for an opportunity," sighed Charlie, filled with all this lore. "If I could only get Goodsell out sometime and make one good capture, maybe—" Charlie didn't know it, but his chance was coming.

"There's going to be something doing this week," said the book-keeper, casually, one Monday morning as he opened the mail. "David Abercrombie, the secretary of the International Chair Company, writes that he expects to call on our Mr. Flint in relation to a contract for a year's supply of varnish. The Unexcelled people got the International away from us last time—500 barrels of fillers, dipping varnish and rubbing varnish—about $30,000 worth. I wish Mr. Flint was here, but—David's got to place that contract with the Brilliant this time, or I'll break a leg."

"Whew! $30,000 in one contract," said Charlie, wistfully.

"Cheer up," said the book-keeper kindly. "You're doing good work, and when Flint comes home I'll speak that word for you."

"Oh, thank you," said the invoice clerk, overjoyed.

Tuesday and Wednesday passed, and no Abercrombie came. Thursday and Friday likewise effaced themselves from the calendar, and still no secretary of the International Chair Company. The book-keeper was puzzled, but there was nothing to do but wait on Mr. Abercrombie's pleasure. Saturday was a half-holiday in the summer months, and this particular Saturday came two days before the Fourth of July which fell on Monday. Goodsell gave the matter up when the gentleman had not arrived by half-past eleven on Saturday morning.

"I'm going to take my family out of town over the Fourth, Peterson," he said to the invoice clerk as he put on his coat. Abercrombie won't bother us now until after the holiday—if he bothers us at all. I'm afraid the Unexcelled people have gobbled him again." The going of Goodsell was the signal to depopulate the offices, the clerks all having their private holiday business to attend to, and in ten minutes, Charlie, who wanted to quit with a clean desk, was alone in his glory.

"How I wish—" began Charlie. His wish dealt with the recalcitrant Abercrombie, but got no farther, for the door banged open, and a well-dressed man of middle age came in breezily.

"All hands gone?" demanded the stranger, pulling out his watch. "Where's Goodsell or—"

Charlies fought a tendency to faint away and jumped down from his stool.

"Come right in, Mr. Abercrombie," he said pleasantly, "we've been looking for you all week, and Mr. Goodsell gave you up ten minutes ago and went away."

"Eh, what?" said the stranger, looking queerly. "Oh, yes, I expected to get here before this, but I was detained. Who are you?"

"I'm Mr. Charles Peterson," said the invoice clerk. "Don't let the fact that Mr. Flint and Mr. Goodsell are away bother you, for I am conversant with the sit-

uation and prepared to discuss matters right to the bottom."

"Oh, you are?" said Mr. Abercrombie. He spoke rather crossly and Charlie reflected that the hour of noon was not the time to plunge for a $30,000 contract. He mentally figured the amount of money in his pocket and his savings in a drawer in the safe; the total was $68.

"I was just about going to lunch, Mr. Abercrombie," he said cordially. "Won't you join me?"

The secretary of the International Chair Company gazed doubtfully at the tall young man before him.

"I guess I'll—" he began, but Charlie had his hat and coat on and was banging the safe doors to, after extracting his wealth.

" 'Never take no for an answer,' " he said, and led the bewildered Abercrombie straight to the Fanshaw House, the swellest hotel in town.

"Order for both, please," said Mr. Peterson, when they were comfortably seated under a big electric fan. Mr. Abercrombie had apparently yielded to the situation and ordered a double porterhouse with mushrooms, a salad, sundry side dishes and a bottle of wine.

"I can't join you there," said Charlie, honestly.

"Eh? You a varnish man and not drink wine?" demanded Abercrombie.

"Yes, sir," said Charlie stoutly. The secretary forbore any more comments and the lunch proceeded with the utmost pleasantness. Abercrombie was a good guest but Charlie afterward reflected that he had done most of the talking himself. The conversation touched on anything but varnish, and got by degrees around to colleges, which brought up football, and Charlie fought half a dozen games over again, his eyes snapping. Dessert came and went, and Charlie called for the bill. It was $12.60 and he paid it without a blink.

"You must have had some plan on foot for the afternoon," said the International man as they left the hotel.

"Yes, I had," said the invoice clerk. "I was going

to a quiet place about 30 miles in the country where they have a dandy golf links—18 hole—ever play golf?"

"Some," said Abercrombie, who was acting ill at ease for a man who had just had a $12.60 lunch. Several people had looked at him as if about to speak, and he had turned his head abruptly.

"Be my guest," said Charlie, his heart palpitating.

"Whew! It's hot in this town—glad to get out in the country—quiet golf has its charms—guess I'll go you," said Abercrombie disjointedly, turning down a side street. There was a handy train and the pair journeyed to the scene of rural delight, Mr. Abercrombie becoming perceptibly easier as the miles grew behind them.

"When is he going to unbutton about that $30,000 contract?" thought the invoice clerk, and talked interestingly himself about everything else.

The afternoon was waning when they arrived at their destination and a cool breeze was blowing. Charlie had a good bag of sticks, plenty for two, and they peeled down to their negligee shirts, lit remarkably good cigars which Abercrombie produced, and set forth over the course which abounded in natural scenery. Abercrombie was easy now, and happy as a boy. Charlie was no mean hand at the game himself, but here was a man who put him to his trumps. The $30,000 contract faded for the present, for the business of his life just then was to beat Abercrombie, and the two went out and in over the 18-hole course like a pair of distinguished generals fighting a deadly campaign. At the last hole they stood even and Charlie to play. He sized up the distance, swung his club, steadied his beating heart, and—muffed. Abercrombie made his play and holed.

"Gad! what a game!" he breathed, while Charlie grinned ruefully.

"Do you suppose Mrs. Flint's in town?" asked the secretary suddenly. "I—I'm slightly acquainted with her, and perhaps she—"

Charlie's man was going to get away from him and nothing said about the contract!

"I believe she's been expecting Mr. Flint to return, but he hasn't come, and she's at one of her married daughter's," said Charlie, fully resolved to invite himself along if Mr. Abercrombie persisted in his design.

"Which daughter?" asked Abercrombie. Charlie couldn't tell. "Oh, well, it'll keep," said the secretary, to Charlie's infinite relief, and asked about the hotels in the neighborhood of the links.

"There's a good one down by the river," said the bill clerk, dissembling his satisfaction, and led the way to the cosy retreat surrounded by willows, where they bathed luxuriously and supped without a recollection of the $12.60 lunch in the middle of the day.

"Come spend the evening in my room," said Abercrombie cordially, as they left the table. "I've a little proposition to make which I think will fill in the time pleasantly." At last the $30,000 contract! Seated in rocking chairs, smoking some of Abercrombie's fine cigars, that gentleman cleared his throat, and said: "Any scruples about taking a hand at cribbage with a trifle up to make it interesting?" Charlie swallowed a cussword and admitted that he sometimes indulged in the game, whereupon the secretary produced a peg-board he had borrowed from the barkeeper together with a pack of cards, and with keen enjoyment whiled the hours away until midnight, taking Charlie's dollars from him.

"Good night, my young friend," said Abercrombie. "I am a busy man without much time for the frivolities, and I want to thank you for one of the happiest days I ever spent in my life. If I can do anything for you in return, command me."

If he could do anything for him! Charlie counted over his money which had shrunk from $68 to $29.40, for he had paid for everything, and lost over $20 at cribbage besides, a game he thought he could play until that evening. Why in the name of sense didn't the man come to the center and fight it out about that con-

tract? That would be doing something for him. Thus reflecting, Charlie, being exceedingly tired, went off to sleep.

The next day was Sunday and Abercrombie at breakfast asked Charlie about his attitude on Sunday golf. Charlie's attitude displayed itself in a prompt challenge to set forth, and he proceeded to whip his adversary savagely on the field where he himself had suffered defeat the day before. Abercrombie chuckled and was hugely delighted at the outcome, and suggested church, and the pair hunted up a place of worship, denomination unknown, and listened to a vivid description of the hereafter of those who broke the Sabbath by playing golf. It was most edifying.

Monday was the Fourth of July and as a holiday a failure, for it was raining and golf was not practicable. It was a good day for discussing $30,000 contracts, thought Charlie, and was half tempted to broach the subject and learn his fate. Somebody said that the pickerel were biting in a pond not far away, and Abercrombie hinted that he hadn't fished in years. There is no better place in the world to talk business than a boat on a pond on a rainy day with the fish biting, so Charlie rose to the hint, borrowed a couple of overcoats, bought bait, hired a boat and tackle and they fished royally all day with never a word about varnish.

On Tuesday, Charlie omitted to go back to the invoice desk of the Brilliant Varnish Works, and instead, got a loan on his watch from the hotel clerk and hired a team and took Mr. Abercrombie driving over some beautiful country. The secretary of the International Chair Company was charmed. On Wednesday they fished in the morning and golfed in the afternoon. On Thursday the same in every particular. On Friday, Charlie was confronted with the fact that he was broke, probably out of a job and 30 miles from home, and listened with joy to a wild proposition of Abercrombie to walk in and take the day to it.

They walked, and Abercrombie suddenly recalled

the object of his visit to the Brilliant Varnish Works. Fillers, dipping varnish and rubbing varnish, prices, terms, the faults of the varnishes in the past, the faults in shipping and twenty other phases were reviewed, and Charlie fought manfully for his firm. Abercrombie knew what he was talking about, Charlie could see it, and when the secretary coaxed him along to the subject of varnish manufacture and tests, Charlie gave himself free rein and turned himself inside out with a flood of eloquence in favor of Brilliant varnishes over all the rest of the varnishes in the world, which would have amazed Goodsell if he could have heard it.

"The Unexcelled people beat the Brilliant folks in one respect," said Abercrombie, "their salesmen are more persistent. They have had a man at the International factory for three days, fighting for a renewal of the contract, and now that I've heard both sides, I think I will give the contract to that persistent fellow."

The young man tramping at Mr. Abercrombie's side loomed about seven feet tall as he delivered his ultimatum.

"Mr. Abercrombie," he said, "if persistence is what appeals to you, I have stuck to you for a solid week, waiting for you to broach the varnish subject. I am going to stick to you like an old man of the mountain and talk Brilliant varnish until I get that contract. If I die before I get it, my ghost will walk beside you until the contract is handed in. That contract is righteously the property of the Brilliant Varnish Works and if you had talked to Robert Flint, you would have given it to him, you know you would, for he has got the varnish world skinned when it comes to persistence. Now, I want that contract!"

"Oh, take the blamed contract, Mr. Charles Peterson," said Abercrombie, "I guess I've drawn you out enough."

"Shake!" roared that gentleman and wrung Mr. Abercrombie's hand.

"I've got it! I've got it!" declaimed Charlie,

bouncing into the quiet offices of the Brilliant Varnish Works on Saturday morning.

"Got what?" asked Goodsell severely. "The jimjams?"

"The International $30,000 contract!" shouted the invoice clerk.

"Nonsense!" said the book-keeper. "Mr. Flint got wind that Abercrombie was coming, and he stopped off and saw Abercrombie, beat the Unexcelled, horse, foot and dragoons, and got the contract!"

"Wh—wh—who in blazes have I been sticking to like a leech for the last week, thinking it was Abercrombie?" asked Charlie, with a dismal vision of a good $100 gone to the bad.

"Mr. Flint's back and wants to see you," said the book-keeper curtly. Sadly the tall young fellow made his way to the private offices, where Mr. Flint was busily dictating letters. The voice sounded familiar to the invoice clerk—where had he heard it? He twisted the door knob and walked in.

"Hello, you sticking-plaster, Mr. Charles Peterson, I hear you're suffering to go on the road and sell varnish," said Mr. Flint, smiling amiably. "Well, try it at $2,000 a year for a starter, and—much obliged for my happy week!"

THE WYANDOTTE SHARES

BY EDGAR DAYTON PRICE

Old Sherwin passed in the office as a trifle—just a trifle—crazy. Not that it manifested itself in his work. George Sherwin was a capable and accurate book-keeper, and the books over which he toiled for eight hours every day were marvels of precision and neatness.

The lack of sanity showed itself in the old man in his interest in stocks. Feverishly he followed the market, keeping tabs on 50 or 60 stocks, from Western Union and Northern Pacific down through the list to the "Industrials," some of which lacked a footing on the stock exchange. A $20 a week book-keeper without a spare $10 bill to bless himself with, going home with a long face over the fact that some stock had dropped 10 points—of course he was a bit crazy.

The office did not know the old man's history, how in his younger days he had been a broker on the "street" and a sharp one, how he had transgressed the unwritten rule of brokerage never to speculate on your own account, how he had made one of those wild successes which sometimes last a fortnight, and how, in the windup, the market cleaned him up with neatness and dispatch and after a week of frantic fighting to retrieve himself sent him to his bed with brain fever.

It was probable that during the heyday of his success old George had been a trifle crazy. The brain fever left him sane enough, without any outward longing for speculation and an unimpaired ability to keep books. He could have had a job in a dozen broker's offices, keeping the complicated records of the stock business, but he had a terror of the game and went away, to turn up years later in the manufacturing town where we find him keeping books at $20 a week for the Peebles factory of the Amalgamated Button Company.

With the years had come a dulling of the terror of the days that had "wiped him out," and the old man kept sheets on the market and did an imaginary business in Wall Street. He made some shrewd guesses, too, and if he had actually margined the stocks he had slated for a big rise, he could have sold out a rich man. On the other hand, he sometimes missed and the favorite stock went down. Those were the days he went home with a long face.

There was quite an opportunity right in town for speculation in a not very expensive way if the book-keeper had had the money. The manufacturing plants were all big ones—cotton mills, steel plants, sewing machines, agricultural implements and so on. Not a one but was incorporated with stock and bonds to sell, some of the securities being held in the local market at a few cents per share. Everybody who made a little over their necessities bought shares of some kind; all the employes of the different concerns were privileged, nay, requested, to buy preferred stock in their employers' businesses, and down-town there was a place where local stocks were bought and sold.

There are possibilities in industrials, even at a few cents per share. In times of prosperity, holders of local securities received dividends, and the value of their holdings soared. The shipping clerk in the Peebles factory was a devotee to Consolidated Locomotive, the Burnham and Barry branch of which was located down by the railroad, and one day he came into the office radiant and had the book-keeper cash him a check for $160.

"What do you think of that, Pop?" he asked jubilantly. "That check represents an outlay of $40 in Consolidated Chu-Chu Futures when things were so slack six months ago. Now they are full of orders and everything humming, and I've sold out $120 to the good—money found. Why don't you go in?

The old speculator's eyes glowed as he straightened out the neat check. He knew in a way about the local industrial situation, but it seemed puerile beside the doings of the New York market. and he had not both-

ered with it. And here was a chap drawing $15 a week actually cleaning up $120 of money, real money, while he, George Sherwin, frittered away his time to no purpose. A bunch of money, not a large bunch, would do so much, too. There was that place for sale, 10 miles out, house, barn, boat house and 10 acres of ground on a lake—a man could keep chickens there, chickens! and a horse and cow and a boat on the lake for fishing purposes. Three thousand dollars would buy it.

"I've got no money to throw away," he said. "This rise in Locomotive is a mere fluke."

"Fluke nothing," said the shipping clerk. "I saw it a-coming. And some of the boys have made money in thread stocks—buying for a fall. The thread mills have passed a dividend and the stocks are away off, sure enough. And there is the Wardell Plow Company stock—"

"Here's your money, go away," growled the book-keeper, frightened at the feeling the talk had engendered.

"All right, stick to those big deals that are keeping you poor," said the shipping clerk, winking elaborately.

It was shortly after this the book-keeper took to keeping chickens. Mrs. Sherwin and the girls were delighted when one day the taciturn man came home early and went to tinkering with an old shanty on their place, and it developed that he was making it into a chicken house. If the wound of their earlier days had healed in the husband, it had not in the wife, who for months back had watched her preoccupied mate figuring, figuring interminably evenings by the fire, and who saw the old gambling propensity growing in him again. If he would only take to chickens it would be a hobby to take his attention when he wasn't keeping books, and he would have no time to bother with those things which had come so near wrecking their happiness.

"Here's the beginning of our flock," said George,

coming home the next Saturday with a big Wyandotte rooster under his arm.

"What a pretty fowl," cried the women, delighted.

"He ought to be pretty," said the husband grimly, "he cost me $10."

"Ten dollars!" shrieked Mrs. Sherwin, aghast.

"I chanced to have the money saved and had a notion to take a little flier—"

"It's all right, Geordie," said Mrs. Sherwin quickly, "I only thought $10 a little bit extravagant for one rooster, but you know best. He's such a handsome fellow, you ought to give him a name."

"I'm going to call him 'Stitch,'" said the bookkeeper gravely, withal a twinkle in his eye.

"'Stitch!'" cried the mother and the two daughters, in concert.

"See here, ma, and you two girls, can't I keep a few fowls and call them by names of my own without you getting mad?" he asked. "Wait till I buy the hens and name 'em and you won't think 'Stitch' anything. I have my little whims, but if they are going to make you unhappy, I'll—"

"Goodness! call the birds anything you like," said the women, while "Stitch," released, flew to the top of the fence and crowed loudly.

Sherwin's selection of hens was the talk of the neighborhood and gave painful recurrence to the whispers about his sanity. From his savings he bought them one at a time, and the first hen was a Bramah, christened "Twist." A Plymouth Rock followed, labeled "Wire," a Cochin China called "Reaper," a brown Leghorn gravely named "Peebles," apparently after the factory that employed him. Of the flock no two were of the same breed, they came one at a time at intervals and the prices the old man claimed to have paid for them were simply outrageous and kept the family short for days afterward. "Stitch," the rooster, lorded it over the heterogeneous flock and the owner sat by the hour and proudly watched them busily picking up their living. If rumors of his brain trouble which resulted in the outlandish names reached

him, he did not deign to notice them and in a short time the whim ceased to attract attention.

The chicken fad was a fortunate one for the old man. He was out bright and early working in the hen house, and never were fowls so tenderly cared for. As hens will, they reciprocated the attention lavished on them, and laid eggs right royally; eggs big and eggs little, eggs brown and eggs white, speckled eggs and double yolks—the family had eggs to eat and eggs to sell. Sherwin quit his imaginary speculation in stocks and instead, opened up a set of books with his hens over which he never tired working.

It was quite easy to fall into stock nomenclature in keeping track of the hens and their doings. When "Twist" or "Wire" or "Reaper" were laying regularly, their market was "rising," when they moulted and shortened on laying, the market was "off," and he was "long" or "short" on their products as the case might be. The book-keeper laid out sheets and gravely set down the names of the flock, now counting over 25 with another rooster named "Oilcloth" and reduced the fluctuations in hen-fruit to figures on a decimal basis. Strangely enough, both the roosters figured in the sheets, but presumably their percentages were based on the fights they indulged in, in which, however, the Wyandotte invariably won.

Sherwin made no secret of his foible in the office, where it created much amusement.

"You must be planning to get rich on your poultry yard," laughed the boys; "what are you going to do with your surplus?"

"You'll see me living on my own place and driving in behind my trotter yet," said the book-keeper, in no wise moved by the grins. "My hens 'Wire' and 'Twist' are worth three times what I paid for them and are declaring good dividends right along. I've got to the point now where I put the profits of my hens into still more hens, and some of these days I'll strike a hen that lays golden eggs, and then—the trotter."

"Fine, fine!" said the office help, sadly tapping

their foreheads behind Sherwin's back.

It was a pity that the book-keeper had not taken to keeping hens years before. He lost his taciturnity and actually whistled as he tossed his ledgers about, and one day he opened a bank account.

"You see," he explained to the banker, "my hens are making money for me and I need a place to keep it safe. Then, too, I am meditating going into the hen business wholesale and I will want to borrow money."

"Made up your mind what breeds to plunge on?" asked the amused banker, who knew all about the 25 and more varieties.

"Yes," said his customer gravely, "I do. There will be an elimination in my varieties to two or three very soon—I have spotted the best layers by keeping sheets on them, and the rest can go to the chopping block for all I care."

"Come in and see me when you want to borrow," said the banker. "I guess we can accommodate you to a few hundred—with a good name on your note."

"Thanks; I'm going to send you a couple of dozen of fresh eggs," said the book-keeper, departing.

The women mourned when most of the flock were sacrificed. It was some consolation that Sherwin had not paid big prices for them, and according to him they were not thriving and needed the axe. For a time they ate chicken—roasted, fried, fricassed and boiled, and the back yard looked deserted.

"Never mind, ma," said the poultry fancier, "those that remain will get along better for my exclusive attention and I can work out the problem of that kind that lay the golden eggs"—he chuckled.

"Geordie"—the good woman was looking at him apprehensively, and he chuckled again.

"Don't worry, ma, my head's all right," he declared, and started for the Peebles button factory whistling.

True to his word, Sherwin became a borrower at the bank, unknown, however, to his women folk. Simultaneously he began to fill up his hen yard with

Wyandottes mostly, then "Wires" and "Twists." About this time he hired a carriage for a Sunday afternoon and took Mrs. Sherwin and Adelaide and Gussie for a drive, stopping at a little place on a lake about 10 miles from home to rest. It was a cosy spot, a nice house, a barn, trees, a vegetable garden and the rest grass. There was a boat house and a wharf at the lake, and a little way out, fish were "jumping," in the most alluring manner.

"What a paradise this is," sighed the women; "how much better to live here than in that smoky city. You could keep hens by the thousand on a place like this, Geordie," said the wife, wistfully.

"When my present 'Stitches,' 'Wires' and 'Twists' work out that golden egg problem among themselves," he chuckled, "we'll buy a place like this, get a horse and a cow and live happy ever after."

"It's time we were starting for home," said the good woman hastily. Somehow, she felt frightened when her husband talked so about his hens—it reminded her of the days when he had quit brokering for speculating.

The "performance sheets," as Sherwin styled his hen-book-keeping, were quite easy to keep now, reduced to three classes. Unending attention worked wonders with the flocks; the Wyandottes, Bramahs and Plymouth Rocks were separated, quite filling the narrow quarters, and the fine big eggs were saved and hatched out in an incubator. There was a ready sale at big prices for settings of eggs and young pullets, and really, Sherwin was making quite a profit on his investment. Not enough to account for a bank book carefully kept locked in his desk at the Peebles factory with several hundreds to his credit or the easy accommodation he was getting at the bank, however.

For the Wyandotte rooster, "Stitch," the bookkeeper developed a mighty affection as time went on. He often sat and watched the proud fowl, lord of the back yard, and muttered things beneath his breath. The finest of living was none too good for the big rooster and a world of petting "Stitch" got from his

attentive master. Was it possible that from the race of "Stitch" the golden eggs were to come?

The shipping clerk of the Peebles factory was by this time a regular speculator in the local "industrial" stock market. The profits on his deal in "Chu-Chu" had gone in a dozen different directions for industrial shares which he bought and sold industriously as the values fluctuated. The shipping clerk was not always wise in his investments and formed the habit of consulting with the book-keeper, whose former connection with the big stock market had leaked out. Sherwin took time from figuring his performance sheets to give the shipping clerk counsel, and in turn the shipping clerk reported the many rumors he picked up of happenings in the various industries likely to affect the price of shares.

"I want your advice on 'Sewing Machine,' Sherwin," he said one day. "There is something new going on in the Standard factory, and a friend of mine there, a pattern-maker, tips me that it is a new invention, something that will make the sewing machine trust crazy when the Standard machine comes out with it. He doesn't know this positively, just a flying shop rumor, you know, but what with somebody buying 'Sewing Machine' pretty freely, the stock is stiffening, and—"

"Buy it, my boy, buy it—for a rise," said the bookkeeper. "I happen to know that the Standard people have been kicking the price down for some reason, and it may be that they are going to buy it back cheap if they've got a good thing cooking and make all the money for themselves. Buy it by all means." The bookkeeper turned his back and went on figuring his absurd hen-sheets and the shipping clerk went away. Sherwin went down to the bank in the middle of the morning and borrowed $1,000 with which he purchased poultry, making a neat entry on the performance sheet under the head, "Stitch."

"The time is ripe," he muttered.

The shipping clerk bought "Sewing Machine," a very little, for "Sewing Machine" was on the rise and the Standard people were buying back their stock as fast as offered. In a few days he hastily sold it, for "Sewing Machine," never worth more than 90 cents a share, was kiting alone to the impossible price of $2. A week later the shipping clerk was kicking himself, metaphorically, all over the Peebles factory, for "Sewing Machine" was bid at $5 the share and none offered. That rumor about the new invention was a fact.

In a fortnight it was whispered that the Standard people were in a hole over their own stock. The original issue had been 500,000 shares at $1 per share, 10 shares being given outright for a time with every machine sold, as a premium on a rather poor sewing machine. Now, when they had an improvement which made their machine highly valuable, they found that others had been busy picking up Standard stock, and that the company was a minority holder of its own stock, being short several thousand shares. It soon developed who had bought the stock, for agents of the sewing machine trust, throwing aside all disguise, came into the open and bought right and left at any price. The Standard people frantically tried to outbid them.

It was a fight for existence on one side and monopoly on the other. If the trust won and got a majority of the shares they took the Standard company and the valuable improvement into camp, the improvement went on the trust machines and the inventors were "squeezed." If the Standard succeeded in buying a few shares, it could hold its position and in a few years wipe the trust off the face of the earth with its superior machine. Both sides ransacked the country and bought shares at ruinous prices and the contest quickly narrowed down to the possession of 2,500 shares—both parties had approximately 248,000 shares, and the one that got hold of the missing block of 2,500 would win the mastery. Somehow it was learned by the trust agents and the Standard people

that the block was owned right in town, and a sleepless hunt for it was begun.

George Sherwin was sitting in his poultry yard, smoking a pipe and meditating as he threw corn to his favorite rooster. His meditations were interrupted by a man who came running from the house. At the same time another man tumbled over the back fence.

"I understand you are the owner of 2,500 shares of Standard stock," they said simultaneously, glowering at one another.

Sherwin chuckled.

"Do you see that rooster there?" he said; "his name's 'Stitch'—named for the Standard sewing machine. Now, supposing 'Stitch' stands for 2,500 shares of Standard stock, what'll you give me for my rooster?"

"Fifteen thousand dollars," said the "Trust" promptly.

"Twenty," roared the Standard man.

'Thirty," bellowed the "Trust."

'Fifty thousand dollars," said the Standard man, white-faced. Sherwin recognized him as the president of the company.

"I'll have to consult my principals," pleaded the "Trust" man. "Will you hold off for half an hour?"

"Fifty thousand, one—two—three, do I hear any more? Sold—to the president of the Standard Sewing Machine Company, and a mighty fine Wyandotte rooster you've bought for the money," declared the rooster's owner. "Would you mind stepping into the house to complete the transaction?"

"Geordie, what's the matter?" asked his wife, half-crying. She had sent the president of the Standard company out in the yard to see her husband, the worthy declining to wait in the parlor, and the noise of the bargaining had come ominously to her ears.

"Matter? Why, I've found the hen that lays the golden eggs, and 'tain't a hen, either—it's my rooster, 'Stitch,' who stood for 2,500 shares of sewing machine stock, that I've just sold for $50,000."

"Geordie!" said his wife wildly.

"I ain't crazy, ma. I've been doing a little speculating in stocks right here in town, and to keep you from worrying, I've made you think it was hens I was dabbling in. 'Stitch' has stood all along for Sewing Machine, 'Wire' for the wire mill, and 'Twist' is the thread factory, et cetera, et cetera."

When the news got to the office, there was a quick revision of opinions about old Sherwin, the bookkeeper.

"Crazy? I wish I came from the same lunatic asylum," was the envious cry.

"What are you going to do with your wealth, George?" they asked the man, busily writing in his ledgers as usual.

"Going to buy back my Wyandotte rooster and move to paradise," he said with a chuckle.